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A VILLAGE MARKET.

AMONG THE HUTS IN EGYPT.

SCENES FROM REAL LIFE.

BY

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ETC., ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

HAVING been frequently asked to publish some scenes and sketches by friends who had read the little work called "Ragged Life in Egypt," and especially to give some further details concerning the people among whom I dwell, and the schools established for their children (which I commenced under such difficulties some years ago), I have thought it best to extract from diaries and letters written at various times, such parts as seemed suitable. They are offered almost word for word as they were written, in the hope that the simplicity and truthfulness of the sketches may atone for the homeliness of some, and the want of striking incidents in almost all.

I have had too much intercourse with the humbler classes, both in town and country, not to be fully aware of their ignorance, and of the degradation of many of their customs and habits, and have seen too plainly the difficulties attend-

ing the endeavour to do good, to be at all inclined to draw pictures coloured by undue enthusiasm or romance. But the dark side is not presented solely to the reader, nor are the descriptions exaggerated by dislike, for I love Egypt and her people sincerely, and appreciate all that is to be admired in both.

While, therefore, the hindrances in the path of Christian benevolence are not concealed, the compensating blessings are heartily acknowledged, and a series of brief photographic sketches (if we may use the expression), giving anecdotes of daily life and humble missionary efforts, are offered to those who take an interest in modern Egypt, and especially to those who like to hear about the sowing of the Gospel seed, whether in the lanes of the city, among the huts, or on the shores of the ancient river.

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AMONG THE HUTS.



CHAPTER I.

EGYPTIAN SUMMER AND SECOND SPRING.

WE are wont to speak of April and May as spring, even when living in Egypt, from old habit, but, in fact, our first spring here is over by the beginning of April; then the fields are white with ripening barley, and shortly after golden with wheat. In May the harvest is finished in the neighbourhood of Cairo, and further south a good deal earlier still (near Alexandria it is later, of course); but in no part of Egypt is May anything but full glowing summer. The trees which had shed their leaves, as many do in April, are green again and the orange blossoms have given way to

the tiny green oranges which take so long to come to perfection: while common fruits (like common characters, perhaps), are ripened rapidly, this royal fruit requires six months or more to ripen it, and give its rich gold colour to the rind. The summer of Egypt, then, may be said to begin in April, and last till September. It is rather a trying season for foreigners from the extreme heat, but especially for those who are obliged to reside in town, or indeed who do not possess a garden of their own. Those who *do*, may revel in flowers and shade all through the year more or less, and by planting groves of tall reeds, or a thick hedge or wall, on the sides near highroads, may shut out dust in a great degree, and enjoy the Eastern delight of "a garden enclosed," which is alluded to in Scripture evidently as something dearly prized and reserved for the owner's special use.

The less favoured individuals, on their rides, when the freshness of early morning or the sunset hour allows them to be out of doors, cast a longing glance at the glimpses afforded them as they pass these pleasant gardens: the clustering creepers, gay with varied colours, that

peep over the wall or paling, and the broad plantain leaf, seldom less than a yard and a-half long, and of the brightest of greens, which hangs out its flag, and the showy scarlet leaves of the shrub here called the Consul's Daughter, by the common people, and the graceful palm towering over them all. But on the open roads the sun and the dust have undisputed sway, and the land seems like a great "hot plate,"—only heated from above, instead of from below like the kitchen ranges. Soon the corn has been cleared off; no need for us to "lay it up in shocks to dry," as the infant-school song teaches the little English children; it is dry enough, and *crackles* with dryness, indeed, as it is heaped on the camels, and carried off to be threshed by the feet of the patient oxen. Seated in a curious, though simple kind of wooden chair, without legs, the peasant drives round and round on the threshing-ground till his corn is all trodden out of the husk. Some of the great men have lately introduced threshing-machines on their estates, but the old plan is the one in common use. I cannot help liking it, because of the many Scripture associations, and also because it is so much more picturesque than a steam

machine, but I dare not deny the disagreeable fact that it mixes a great deal of dust and earth with the corn, making it difficult to clean it properly.

The summer nights are very fine generally, though when the wind is in the hot quarter there is but very little coolness even at night; when it is blowing from the north there is a certain degree of freshness of course in the night; and the moonlight is as different from the cold silvery moonlight of Europe, and as much more beautiful as a clear atmosphere can make it. The soft, yellowish beams throw a strange mysterious radiance on the waving palm-branches, and the tall minaret towers visible from our house-top; the shadows so deep, the outlines so distinct,—it is indeed a fair sight, but coming at the close of a long hot day is often not fully appreciated because one is so tired! I hear of people going out to stroll in the moonlight certainly, but either they must be unusually vigorous, or else have spent most of their day in repose. One who has been actively at work all the forenoon (and afterwards the intense heat makes rest often unattainable), is so thankful to sleep when an *approach* to darkness and com-

parative coolness set in, that no possible delights of moonlight rambles seem so refreshing as the pillow. Moreover, the finest night has not the refreshing, invigorating effect of early morning, which is so delicious everywhere in fine weather, but so peculiarly reviving to the mind and body in the hot season of southern lands.

Well, at length April, May, and still hotter June and July, are past; the melons are in their prime still, but where they get their abundant juices is a wonder, so dry and parched is all the earth. The ground seems turning to powder from sheer heat. August is begun, and the Nile is the subject of every one's talk, whether it is cut and the sluices let out to fill the canals, by the 5th or 6th (the earliest time), or not till the 16th or 17th (the latest). It depends on the river having risen to a certain point, and this being influenced by the rains in the mountains, far away where it rises, is to the inhabitants of Egypt quite uncertain till the last moment. Sooner or later the command is given by the authorities—a festival is held by all classes who flock to the river-side, and spend the night in diversions of various kinds. Gradually the water now spreads over the lower lands, and fills the numerous

canals; every hollow and ditch is before long full; water abounds where it was so scarce a short time before; and after a very brief interval a kind of second spring commences.

There is something very curious to the eyes of a foreigner from the north in this season following the long dry summer. The fields which had been first covered with harvest, then with "thorns and thistles" (which rapidly ripened their seed, even before they were cut down by the plough), and then had looked as brown and bare as fields in March in England, now begin with amazing speed to send forth the green shoots of corn, clover, and vegetables of all kinds.

The gardens, as before observed, are always green, and those who possess them can at all times enjoy the luxury of shade; but the agricultural districts are deficient in trees for such a country, though many of the villages are surrounded with splendid groups of sycamore, fig, mulberry, and lebichs,* but not in such abundance as the climate requires; and during the summer, shade is a blessing not always to be found, though invariably desired. When September

* A species of acacia, but with a blossom unlike what we call acacias in Europe, and a much denser foliage.

comes with its fresher air and plentiful moisture in every place, there is less absolute necessity for seeking shade than in summer certainly ; but the sun in Egypt is always so strong that except in midwinter one requires more or less protection. In fact, the very words “ shadow ” and “ shade ” bring ideas of delight to the mind of the inhabitant or resident in a hot climate ; in any place a shadowless view is glaring and devoid of beauty, but it is impossible in words to do justice fully to the value or the beauty of *shadow* in the East ! The cool violet shadow which looks so refreshing in contrast to the burning glare around,—nothing gloomy is associated with it, for the hues in that transparent atmosphere are too rich to convey any idea of gloom ; depth and coolness alone are suggested by the strongest shadow thrown by a high wall or a steep rock on the desert, or by the dense foliage of the dark green lebach and the massive sycamore fig-tree. While riding home, after an excursion to visit some poor person, or to get some early morning air (and finding that even by eight o’clock the burning heat has already set in), how often I am reminded of the passages in Scripture referring to shadows, and how keenly is their beauty appreciated when

a few minutes' rest under a wall seems to bring such a grateful sense of repose: "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;" "I sat down under his shadow with great delight;" "the shadow of a cloud," etc.; these and similar passages come vividly to the mind on such occasions.

But to return to the second spring. It is just when the drought and heat are at their utmost, that the waters of the great river having risen to their fullest, are let out, and the gradual flow commences, which in a few days has a wonderful effect in cooling the air; the renewal of freshness and verdure follow by degrees; the gum acacia puts forth a new crop of little golden ball-like blossoms, deliciously fragrant; then the jasmine and roses begin to show buds; and while the gardens flourish thus, the fields are turned into temporary lakes, glittering in the bright sunshine; the dry and parched watercourses are filled, and beside them the tall reeds wave their green flags in the breeze. "The parched ground" is become "a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (Isa. xxxv.). Now the date palms are in their glory; the great clusters of ripe fruit—some red, some almost black, and others of a

golden yellow (according to the variety)—hang in rich profusion from the crown of feathery branches; the yellow and red often looking in the evening sunshine like gigantic bunches of gold and coral beads; a more beautiful fruit can scarcely be seen than the ripe date as it grows. The pomegranate and quince are also abundant at this season: the former is, however, in its decline; and the date, in spite of its beauty, is not to European taste so valuable a fruit as the apples and pears of Europe, which are imported in October and November into the Egyptian markets, and always find a rapid sale.

Wherever you ride you see the peasants carrying the beautiful purple and green sugar-canes over their shoulders, or crunching pieces of them with their fine strong white teeth; and in the fields a group often catches the eye engaged in parching the young ears of maize, and partaking of this simple but much-esteemed article of food; and sometimes a woman with parched corn, wrapped in the corner of her veil, to carry home, passes one, and recalls the thought of Ruth and the reapers. This is more like autumn, indeed, than spring; and yet the feel of the air, soft and fresh, the absence of decaying leaves, the young

clover just peeping above the soil where the water is subsiding, the roses and other flowers in blossom, all seem to tell rather of spring; the green vegetables are advancing towards maturity; the country looking more and more verdant, and the shortness of the day alone reminds one that we are advancing towards the end of the year. The first year I spent in Egypt, it appeared to me as if everything were turned round, and the seasons had lost their characteristics—the strangeness, which enhanced my admiration, somewhat diminished my pleasure; but by the second year that passed away, I could fully appreciate the fitness of every arrangement of Providence in that wondrous country, so unlike any other in the way in which it receives moisture, and brings forth food for the use of man.

How admirably does its curious system of agriculture supply the servant of God with ready painted pictures and illustrations for Gospel truths! The dry land where nothing vegetates, turned by that little channel into a fertile garden in a few days' time. That very water, drawn from the exhaustless river, and then poured from channel to channel, just like the Spirit of God

given to change man's barren heart. Then the quotations which seem so peculiarly beautiful when actually illustrated, "The garden of herbs watered by the sole of the foot;" the souls that shall be like "a watered garden!"

But, alas! the poor labourer has been so long only occupied with the daily drudgery and animal enjoyments of his life, that it is no easy task to arouse his sluggish mind to turn from earth to heaven. "Why should I hear new things," he says, "Mohammed is the prophet, and I am a true believer; what more do I want?" And he weeds his onion bed and opens his tiny water rills with his hand, and closes them again with his foot; and it is hard to win him to turn for a moment to hear of the water of life! (Deut. iv.) But "the Lord knoweth whereof we are made; He remembereth that we are but dust," and He is patient and long-suffering with the dull of heart. So must those endeavour to be whom by his providence He sends to labour among such. Late and early they must sow their seed; casting it now into the water, now upon the ground, trusting in the Almighty's word that in due season they shall reap if they faint not.

CHAPTER II.

THE "SOOK," OR BAZAAR.

INNOVATIONS are rapidly creeping into the long stereotyped Eastern ways, and even in Cairo (which is far less Europeanized than Alexandria) numbers of French, German, and Italian shops are to be found now where a limited assortment of articles, for the most part very dear and inferior in quality, may be obtained; still the chief necessities of life in the "raw material" (besides all articles made in the country, of course) are purchased from the native sooks or bazaars,* and in the old Oriental way. A tedious way I allow it is, and very tiresome if one is in haste, but everything has a compensating side if one takes the trouble to seek for it; and it is fair to concede that the Eastern mode of shopping affords very picturesque groups, and often a good deal of amuse-

* *Sook* is the Arab term. *Bazaar* is a word of Persian or Indian origin, I believe.

ment to an observant eye. But if the buyer is pressed for time and has many commissions to get through, he finds his patience terribly tried; an English friend has begged him to procure a silk scarf, a few pairs of slippers, a bottle of attar of roses, etc., and for each of these he has to spend time and breath to an extent which the distant giver of the errand little imagined; a whole long afternoon is frequently consumed in three or four such little matters, and in the end the weary buyer naturally overrates his treasures, and feels as if they were hardly appreciated properly, because the amount of trouble he has taken somewhat enhances their value in his eyes. It is a fact not known to all that the bargaining system prevailed formerly in England and all over Europe as it now does in the East, and that to the Society of Friends we owe the more convenient custom of a fixed price, which, begun by them, rapidly spread over England, and thence to most parts of the Continent. But surely in old times shopping must have been even worse in the North than the South. For in a damp chilly climate, standing for an hour chaffering in a draughty doorway must have been a great annoyance, unless our active and time-valuing people managed to des-

patch their bargaining more rapidly than is done here, where time is not looked on as very precious, and the delight in buying and selling is so great that it appears always a mutual pleasure to make the bargain last as long as possible. Another inconvenience, besides the absence of fixed prices, is the necessity for the purchaser to carry home all his parcels, or bring a servant to do so, as no shopman ever sends an article home, and in this particular the European (or, as they are generally called, *Frank*) tradesmen follow the custom of their Eastern friends.

Here is a specimen of one kind of shopping. I wished to buy some pretty vases of red clay made in the "Upper Country," and not always to be had in the city. They are too brittle to be very useful, but being of elegant forms and very cheap, are often purchased as curiosities. Observing a good collection on a stall while riding through a street near one of the great mosques, I looked about for the owner, and, not seeing him, applied to an old man selling pipe-heads of the same material close by, and asked where the owner of the vases was. "He is gone away," replied the greybeard, lazily puffing the smoke from a long pipe. "Is he anywhere near?" "I

don't know." Another man, also a pipe-seller, interposed here, and said he was a friend to the man of vases, and would sell for him. "How much for this, then?" "So much." "No, that is too dear; less by half?" "Nay," cries the friend, his love of bargaining or hope of profiting himself fairly roused, "by the Prophet! that is nothing at all; so much—leave or take." The noise of passers-by makes it difficult to hear, and he holds up as many fingers as he desires coins of a certain value. We hold up *two* in return; he shakes his head and lays down the vase. We move on, but this is only a feint; we return after a few steps, and again repeat "So much." "Very well," bawls the pipe-seller, "take!" and he receiving the price, we seize the prize, which seems enhanced by the difficulty of obtaining it, and the words of Solomon seem truly applicable, "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his way then he boasteth."

The great mass of native shops are small concerns, and it often happens that you are obliged to visit half-a-dozen to get a very few things from the small stock in hand with each. However, the habit still adhered to of having particular streets for particular articles facilitates the search

a good deal. For example, you want some native slippers or shoes, either to send to English friends as curiosities or as really comfortable for wear in hot weather (provided you know what kind to ask for) ; you must then go to the "Shoe Bazaar," and find yourself in a long street with two or three very narrow ones leading out of it, all lined with small shops displaying red and yellow leather slippers of various forms and sizes : some pointed and turned up at the toe, some very wide and rounded (these are specially worn by countrymen, and have very thick soles, and are always a great deal too large—a better fault, by the way, than the frequent European error of having them too small) ; others are elegantly embroidered : these are for ladies' wear—in short, the variety is endless, and the colours being always red and yellow, the effect of the stalls is very pretty. The makers of saddles and housings for horses and donkeys, also usually in bright coloured materials, have their *quarter* in the same way, as have the less lively manufacturers of sieves, combs, palm frames, etc., and the brass-workers, whose region is almost intolerable, from the noise of their hammers on the brazen vessels so largely used in the East.

Sweetmeats are generally sold at stalls or carried about on trays (whence the Arabic proverb, "It is not every one that carries a *tray* who sells sweetmeats ;" meaning that there are exceptions in everything. The choicest kinds of sweetmeats belong, as it were, to certain festivals, and nothing will induce the Mohammedan confectioner to make them except at the proper season ; if asked, he will laugh rather scornfully and reply, "It is not the time."

Another and more important kind of shopping is only known to residents and householders, and even they often depute it to servants ; this is visiting the native wholesale warehouses for the purpose of laying in stores of such things as will keep, and are needed in large quantities. A good deal of money is saved by going to these places, but time must be sacrificed for it ; if, however, a leisure day occurs, it is well worth while to visit some of the "khans," as they are called, as national customs and manners are seen to greater advantage in them than anywhere else. I went over some of the khans at Boulac (the port of Cairo) one day as much for the sake of seeing the "humours" of the place as of procuring a store of rice, etc. The word

khan properly signifies a sort of inn, being, in fact, a place where merchants come to stay for a time with goods from a distance, and contains, also, warehouses of a simple and primitive description, a sort of dens built all round a large court, often with arched gateways and handsome pillars. The one we visited was a picturesque old building, and the light and shadow afforded by its massive stone architecture, with golden rays of sunshine darting down here and there, was beautiful. Some of the *dens* were locked up; others open, their owners standing or sitting at their doors bargaining with some travelling merchants, whose asses and mules, waiting to receive their burdens, stood near, while troops of fowls ran about the court feasting on the scattered grains of rice which afforded them a good subsistence. Several merchants in white turbans and flowing caftans of various rich colours were quietly drinking coffee, and chatting; their negro and Nubian slaves attending upon them, as if business were decidedly a matter to be taken quietly and comfortably. We approached one of the warehouses, and the owner saluted us politely, and brought the whole party into his dark receptacle, where piles of sacks and baskets stitched

closely up lay heaped on each other. Samples were produced from two or three (which he opened before us) and handed round on a metal tray; the cook, who had accompanied us, solemnly rolled the grains in his fingers and meditated for some moments; then selecting a specimen, beckoned to one of the attendants to bring the bags that were to be filled. An innocent stranger might have supposed the business nearly over; on the contrary, it was only just begun. A sum was named by the owner of the rice, and scouted by the cook with indignation; he glanced at us significantly that we might echo his astonishment and disgust; we did so in the best Arabic we could. The owner reduced slightly—was snubbed more than before—became proud and lofty, and shrugged his shoulders; then the cook patted him on the shoulder and softened him a little, raising *his* offer somewhat. At last a sum was agreed on; and the merchant beckoned to one of his assistants, who, with a bright brass inkstand stuck into the yellow silk scarf that girt his waist, was making out accounts on a piece of paper doubled up and held on the hand instead of a table (according to the usual Oriental style); he came forward to make the

bill, and a slave at the same time brought a measure; but now it appeared that the intention was to sell according to *retail* measure instead of *wholesale*, in the hope that Europeans might not be aware of the difference, which of course, as he only sold in large quantities, was depriving us of any advantage over purchasing in a small retail shop. The cook angrily emptied his sacks and hurried us out of the den at once, without listening to the excuses of the deceitful rice merchant; and proceeding to another den we had almost the same scene to act all over again, but this time the right measure was brought, and we came off successfully with full sacks! At the entrance of this khan stood two chairs of handsomely carved woodwork, evidently of considerable antiquity, and exactly similar in form to those seen among Egyptian collections and museums, as thrones for kings and deities. Probably Joseph sat on a similar one when superintending the selling of corn while the sons of Israel stood beside their asses waiting till their sacks should be filled, just like the groups before us. It is these living pictures, recalling Scripture narratives so frequently and vividly, that are such a charm in the East, and that compensate for so many inconveniences and troubles.

We had been at least an hour in the rice-khan, and it was winter, and the afternoons short; so it was needful to hasten to the next place we had to visit, which was the oil-merchants' khan. The building here was not equal to the former one, but the groups were still more gay and picturesque, and the great oil-jars heaped about in every direction were so graceful in form as to make quite an addition to the scene. These merchants appeared wealthy, judging from their dress, at least. Their caftans of silk or fine cloth were of the most brilliant colours and finest texture, and certainly the coolness they showed about securing purchasers would have led one to suppose money was no object to them, were it not that such is the custom of the country, until the bargain is actually begun. It was some time before any one of these oil-merchants could be persuaded to look up from his account-book, or stop chatting with his friends. At length one looked up and said, "What do you desire?" On being informed, he called for samples, and a woman came, bringing two vessels containing some of the rich gold-coloured oil made from lettuce-seed, which is used for common lamps in Cairo. Latterly, indeed, the petroleum, or

paraffin oil, is sold under the name of "*gaz*," a corruption of *gas*, as they suppose this name to mean a particular species of oil. Its brightness in burning is a recommendation which, especially among the heedless Egyptians, outweighs its danger; but, at the time I allude to, it had not been heard of in Cairo, and even now the consumption of vegetable oil is considerable, the people using it, not only for burning, but in cookery. The woman invited us to judge of the samples by the taste; and when we declined she laughed, and, dipping in her own finger, sucked it with great relish, declaring it was excellent! When the long bargaining was ended, a jar was obtained from a store kept for purchasers, and weighed, filled, then weighed again, and sealed up with a wisp of straw well plastered with mud, and finally slung upon a donkey's back to be conveyed to the purchaser's abode. Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith would be amused if they could see the contrast between this style of doing business and their despatch; and probably Hassan and Mahmoud would be equally so if transported to London; and, however they admired the rapid action and constant bustle, would be inclined to think it very fatiguing. "Fair and softly goes

far in a day," would better suit them than the *contrary* proverb of "Time and tide wait for no man," which may be called the specially English proverb.

Our difficulties with change of money, and a want of proper coinage sufficient for the country, are frequent and various. One year, no small change was to be had; and a seller would insist on his customer taking more than he needed of some cumbrous article, or going without any, because he could not change a piece of silver. A boy would be sent running from shop to shop, with a message to ask Mr. Such-an-one to oblige his master with a few piastres! Then the tables were turned, and we were inundated (if such a term may be allowed for heavy metal) with copper coin, and the weight would be more than any reasonable purse could possibly contain.

One day, I recollect, a man wished to give me change for a gold coin chiefly in copper pieces, saying he had no silver.

"You must then hire a donkey and sack to carry it for me," was the reply. "But I am sure you have some silver; I saw it shine when you opened your bag."

On being detected thus, the shopman, grin-

ning, acknowledged he had a *little* silver, but it was so scarce, he did not like to part with it.

The workmen in the sugar manufactories and elsewhere were, at the period I speak of (1869), paid in coppers, and were frequently obliged to bring great bags, and nearly fainted under their loads, though the sum received was small enough.

The old gold and silver coins of Egypt and those of Constantinople are in circulation, but are rare, and yearly will become more so, unless a coinage is issued; for the women wear them as ornaments, and are loth to part with them, as there are very few new ones at all equal to them. They are beautiful coins; the gold especially being less alloyed than that of Europe, and the edging and characters elegantly stamped. From the deficiency of native gold and silver in ordinary use, the coins of many European nations circulate; and, in getting change, one has always to make a number of little arithmetical exercises, very useful, doubtless, in keeping the four rules in sharp practice, but somewhat troublesome when the purchaser is in a hurry, or riding a donkey or pony which does not like standing still! Perhaps it is a festival-time, and the

narrow street is crowded with carriages, donkeys, camels, and foot-passengers ; water-carriers sprinkling you freely from their skins of water ; Turkish soldiers pushing past on spirited horses, which seem ready to trample the children thronging the sweetmeat-stalls in their way ; turbaned groups of Egyptians bargaining as coolly as if there were no crowd ; servants running before their owner's carriage or steed, forcing a passage by dint of shouting, "Thy foot ! thy back ! oh, man ! oh, girl ! make way ! make way !" And in all this confusion, the busy householder who has been out on a shopping-excursion, and is returning with laden saddle-bags, and a servant who carries as many small parcels in his loose tunic as can be crammed into it (for, as I previously observed, you must bring home your purchases yourself)—instead of getting the change quickly, and hurrying out of the bustle, must wait while the seller pulls out of his long purse, first a Russian rouble, then a French two-franc piece, then a Spanish dollar, an English shilling, and, finally, perhaps, two or three little Austrian coins of base metal, value three or four pence. Each of these various pieces of money has to be reckoned in piastres ; one goes

for thirteen and three-quarters, another for five and a half, a third for seventeen and a fifth, etc., etc. The little sums have to be performed while the steed is getting more fidgety every moment from the crowd that push against him. The housekeeper thinks with affection of pounds, shillings, and pence, as, after securing the varied collection of coins, he breaks at last through the impediments, and rides on; but there is a feeling of triumph in getting the desired things after so much trouble that is cheering upon the whole; and one European evil is avoided by our Eastern system of shopping—we have no *bills*! All is ready-money in the Egyptian shop or warehouse. In this one particular I hope they will not imitate Europe, in spite of all the trouble of a Babel of Coinage!

CHAPTER III.

THE FELLAH.

PROPERLY speaking, this term belongs to the *tiller of the ground*, as the word signifies, but it is loosely given sometimes to the poorer classes even in towns, who have nothing to do with cultivating land ; at the same time it is constantly given to all engaged in agriculture, whether rich or poor, whether the actual labourer or the director of his labours—in fact, it answers to farmer, countryman, and peasant.

The style of living among the real Fellaheen (for this is the plural of *Fellah*, as *Fellaha* is the feminine) in the country is pretty much the same ; the primitive customs prevailing among them far more unchanged than in town, of course, and the difference between rich and poor is very slight, apparently, except that the former is better fed, and his wife wears gold instead of brass or silver.

The wealthy peasant has a larger house, but it is of mud, like the huts of the poor, and if he has a few carpets and mattresses, and half-a-dozen little coffee-cups, and some brass vessels for cooking, this is usually the extent of his furniture. In some of the houses of Fellaheen there is a separate apartment for the women, which is called hareem, but the arrangements are of the humblest kind, and truth compels me to say everything is generally dirty and disorderly; though the farmer's wife often looks very well in her soft black muslin veil and rich gold ornaments, and can even display a brocaded silk vest and trousers on grand festivals. The poorer Fellah has a hut with only one room, usually devoid of windows, and with a door so low that the owner must stoop to enter. Fastened by a primitive wooden key of nearly a foot in length, this door is the only piece of timber in the dwelling, which is made of sun-dried mud; it is always swarming with vermin, and dark and suffocating in summer, but the people oftener sleep outside in hot weather, and sit out all day in winter to enjoy the sunshine. How the whole family can possibly squeeze into the small space of one of these huts is amazing; and it is a painful

proof of the degradation of ignorance that they should occupy such wretched abodes, even in places where there is plenty of room and no apparent reason for being so uncomfortably crowded. The genuine Fellah of the country is usually, in spite of this disadvantage, a fine-looking, vigorous man—the fact is, that from the ignorance of the mothers, and the dirt, and mismanagement of the infants, a great number die off under two years old ; and these, of course, include all the weakly ones. Those who survive the effect of dust, flies, and neglect of various kinds, must be tolerably strong by nature, and then the dangers of teething once over, the pure air of the country, and the out-door life with, simple and coarse, but generally sufficient and nourishing food, begin to do their part, and the little Fellah develops into a well-knit, healthy man, capable of a great amount of labour. The irrigation, on which all the crops depend, demands a great deal of hard work at certain seasons ; and during the winter, when there is less of that sort of employment, the care of the cattle, driving them daily to distant pastures, and other matters, keep the villagers pretty well occupied. Were it not for a taxation, at once heavy and irregular, the

Fellaheen would be well off for the common necessities of life, the land being so extremely fertile, and the climate making the requisites of fire and clothing so small, compared with those in colder regions.

The so-called Fellaheen of the towns comprise the lower order of artisans, water-carriers, sellers of fodder for cattle, fruit, milk, vegetables, etc. These have their number frequently increased by country people coming to settle in town ; and as town life is much less favourable to health, this doubtless keeps them from diminishing much, as is the case in Europe.

The country habits are somewhat modified naturally in these, and they partially resemble the citizens in their ways, but always call themselves Fellaheen, and retain their connection with the country. Many of these town Fellaheen occupy houses that once belonged to wealthy owners, but from being in a bad or unfrequented situation, or from some other cause, have been suffered to fall into decay ; and in them may be seen fine specimens of the beautiful carved lattice-work for which Egypt once was famous, and broken flooring of stone, or even marble, in the midst of dust and ruin. But the greater part occupy

houses of mud-brick, with a few stones imbedded in the plaster, and built in a curious, irregular way, with a room here and a room there ; usually two families or more inhabiting the same house, and having the roof and entrance in common. They are dirty, comfortless abodes enough, for the most part, but have this advantage over English dwellings of a similar class, that they have more air. On the other hand, the want of neatness, or rather the utter slovenliness of the abode, outside and inside, is such as could only be rivalled by the homes of the wretchedly poor or vicious in our country. In a climate where great energy and constant care are required to keep even a stone house tolerably free from dust, it may be supposed what those dwellings are which are built of so crumbling a material as dry mud, and whose owners are *not* energetic, and, moreover, are generally quite indifferent to cleanliness. Some are occasionally swept in a shiftless way—the woman squatting on the ground with a short-handled broom or bunch of twigs, with which she makes a feeble clearance ;—but oftener a visitor has literally to scramble over heaps of dust and rubbish to ascend the steps, or find a passage in the court, round which, sometimes three or four,

sometimes as many as eight houses are built : happily the police officer, from time to time, goes round and frightens the householders, otherwise the rubbish would accumulate far more rapidly.

As a town resident, I know more, of course, of the daily life of *town* Fellaheen than of those in the country, and can therefore describe it more accurately. Except in the month of Rhama-dan (when they are fasting by day and eating by night), the people are generally very early risers, especially in the summer, when most are astir as soon as there is any light in the sky. The morning toilette of a *Fellaha*, or woman of this class, is extremely simple, consisting merely in jumping up and shaking herself like a dog (a cat would spend more time on *her* toilette ; and I have often observed what an example is this animal—so much petted in Egypt—to its mistress, in this respect). Once in a while, it is true, the woman goes to the public bath and undergoes a complete ablution, but in the intermediate time she does not even undo the plaits in which her hair is dressed ; and the garments worn by day are slept in at night. At six or eight o'clock (earlier or later, as may happen) the *Fellaha* and her husband—if he has not gone to work at a distance—and the children,

squat round a small earthen dish containing some boiled beans and oil, or some pickles, or a mixture of chopped herbs, etc. Sometimes they merely divide a bunch of green onions, or raw carrots, as a relish to their soft round flaps of coarse leavened bread. Very often there is no regular breakfast, and each takes a bit of cheese and bread, or an orange, and strolls about, or lolls in the dust, to enjoy his meal; but it is commoner to have some sort of gathering for breakfast, though in a very rude way certainly. The good woman's household duties are not varied; she has no cups or plates to wash, or beds to make; and though she *might* sweep up her house, she rarely *does* so: she, therefore, frequently dawdles about, gossiping with her neighbours, and seems to be doing nothing, although, if I call in, and offer to read to her, she is very likely to say, she "is not at leisure!" If it be breadmaking-day, however, this is no longer a mere excuse; she is really busy then, and her daughter, or sisters, or old mother too. It is a day's work for two or three, if the family be not a very small one, between picking and cleaning the corn, carrying it to the mill to be ground, sifting the flour, mixing the leaven, working up

the dough (a process which takes at the least two hours, as they think an immense amount of working needful), shaping the loaves, each of which is not larger in size than one moderately large slice of bread, and finally baking in the mud-oven of the house, unless, being without this, they take the batch to the public native oven. After all this trouble, and the length of time bestowed on it, the bread is, to *our* taste, only eatable when quite fresh, as it gets both sour and dry in a short time. With a fourth of the labour, good bread in large loaves might be obtained, but our Egyptian friends would not, perhaps, relish it; and they are better off, after all, than the very poor of England, because each family makes its own bread, and there is no adulteration; the flour may be coarse, and a little dust get mixed up on windy days, but none of the deleterious articles by which our bakers' bread is often rendered unwholesome.

The men of the family in this class of life are rarely at home in the middle of the day, but get their dinners from a stall or shop, or merely bring a loaf in their vest, and purchase a handful of any raw vegetables that are in season to eat with it, in the intervals of labour. About half an hour

before sunset the humbler coffee-houses in town are always thronged by those, whose work being done, take a short rest, and enjoy a cup of black coffee and a pipe, before returning home. One cannot help feeling that they have, in this respect, greatly the advantage over the labourers of England, who stop at alehouses and spirit-shops for their refreshment; the groups outside these coffee-shops (in the evening generally) seem happy and cheerful, without the unwholesome excitement given by strong drink. Many, of course, cannot leave their business so early, and only return as the sun goes down, but a number of shops in the native quarters close early in the long days; for though fond of gain in their own way, the Orientals are not usually disposed to sacrifice all the comfort of life to the attainment of a little more money; and in this it does not seem that they act unwisely, for if men are slaving till late in the evening, what time can they have to enjoy the blessings obtained by labour, and how hardly does such excessive work press upon those who have no choice in the matter! But to return to our Fellah; while he has been occupied in his daily work, his wife, as before observed, is sometimes very busy, some-

times quite idle, according to circumstances. The care of her children, unhappily, seldom takes up much of her time ; though very affectionate mothers, and ardently desirous of offspring, they are too ignorant, and are married at too early an age, to have any idea of the incessant watchfulness needful to keep young children in a healthy condition ; and consequently the infant mortality is very great, in spite of the freedom from many of the epidemics occasioned by severe cold, so prejudicial to infants among the poorer classes in England.) Mere infants are often rolled up in a heap of dirty rags, and popped down on a heap of rubbish, or even of *mud*, and there allowed to lie, covered with swarms of flies, for hours together. As soon as the child has a few teeth, it is crammed with anything the mother is eating, which always includes a quantity of raw vegetables ; it is kept from the use of soap and water, partly from dislike of trouble, but also partly under the idea that these are injurious to the young ; and altogether it is a wonder that any survive. The children are very much spoilt in general while little, but sometimes the girls are made drudges as they get old enough to be of use ; (this is especially the case in the too numerous in-

stances of divorced parents, when the girl is living with her father and his second wife, her own mother being yet alive; the stepmother often treats her with harshness, and puts all the hard work upon her. There are, however, occasionally pleasing cases of affection and kindness even in this somewhat trying relation of life. I remember once meeting a peasant woman, still young in appearance, who was playing with a child of about a year old, and it came out, in the course of conversation, that it was not her own. "He is my son's child," she said. I was surprised, as she did not look old enough to be its grandmother; and she then told me he was not her own son really, but her husband's, "his first wife was not good and divorced him, and then he married me," she continued, "and I brought up the boy and his sister, that girl who is keeping the goats beside the green tree yonder; they are good children to me, and I love them even more than my own three, they never gave me bad words, and are very good," she added, looking tenderly at the young girl who was drawing near with her charge, and having heard part of what we were saying, was smiling at her.

The Fellaha, or peasant's wife, in the

country, hardly ever departs from the dark-blue cotton and black muslin veil, or occasionally a long checked mantle, answering to veil and cloak in one—which have been, I suppose, the national garb for centuries—but in the town many wear prints of various colours for trousers and for the short waistcoat without sleeves, which is worn in winter as an additional garment. The favourite hues are orange, pink, and yellow, or else magenta crimson.

The older women, even among quite poor people, frequently *dye* their grey locks with the leaves of the *Hennah* plant (also used for staining the fingers of young girls, and particularly brides, of a tawny colour). The effect of orange-tawny mixed with grey, in the rough short locks on an old peasant-woman's forehead, is not ornamental to our taste; but the desire to appear young, or, at any rate, to conceal the ordinary consequences of advancing years is, we know, not found alone in Egypt.

I had a curious instance of the devotion of our sex to personal appearance, when visiting a very poor fishing village one day, where several of the women, ragged and rather barbarous in their looks and ways, were squatted about among

dust-heaps at the entrances of their huts. They were not uncourteous, however, and invited me to stay a little with them; and two or three, after some conversation, listened to some passages which I read from the Testament I had with me, and seemed interested, though excessively ignorant, of course. One elderly woman, with a face like a walnut in complexion, and grizzled locks partially stained of a tawny colour hanging over her eyes, sat gazing steadily at me, and, I hoped, was attending to the story I was trying to explain.

“Yes, yes; it’s good,” she presently observed; “but I wish now to ask you a question.” And, on being given permission (I was naturally hoping for some question on the subject of the reading), she continued, “Have you something in the way of medicine you could give me?”

“What! Are you sick?” I asked. “Where is your malady?”

“I am not sick, but my hair is turning grey, and I wish you to give me some sort of medicine to make it as before!”

“Ah, my good woman, this is not in my power. Besides, at your age, it is only natural to have grey hair. You are getting old! Did

you ever hear of Solomon, and what he said about this?"

"We all know Nebby Suleyman" (the prophet Solomon), exclaimed a venerable, white-bearded fisherman, who sat smoking his long pipe near us. "His words must be good."

"Well, he said that the hoary head was a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

The old man applauded, but the poor woman sighed deeply, and shook her head, as she stroked a plait of parti-coloured hair that hung over her shoulder, and said, "*Could* you not find me a medicine for it?"

I was obliged to disappoint her, and endeavoured to show her the futility of her desires, and to make her see the wisdom of higher matters; but, though one of her neighbours and the old man both appeared moved in some degree, and were ready to listen, *she* was too absorbed in her *hair* to think of anything else.

As sunset draws near, troops of women bearing pitchers on their heads are to be seen returning from the river, or from the canal. The water of the wells in Cairo is brackish, and not used for drinking or cookery; consequently, the fetch-

ing of water—often from a considerable distance—is one of the regular occupations of the women of the humbler classes. I think—fatiguing though it is, no doubt, in the dry season, when they have to go farthest, on account of the drying-up of the nearer canals—this daily walk in the fresh air serves to keep many of the poor townswomen in health and vigour. Certain it is that the class just above them, who pay a water-carrier to bring water in skins instead of fetching it, are far less strong and active, and suffer often from bilious attacks.

Evening usually unites the Fellaheen families at the chief meal of the day. I suppose it is not uncomfortable to them, as they do not know what a neatly-spread table is; but, to look at a circle of them seated on the ground, often in the dirt, with one, or, if they are wealthy in their line, *two* earthen pans of coarse red ware, each containing some little mess, and dipping flaps of bread into them all together, eating quickly, and generally in silence—each rising and going away as soon as he has had enough—it is difficult to fancy it very pleasant and sociable. Sometimes the man eats alone, or with his sons; and the women finish the bowl afterwards. I have heard

a Moslem, rather above the peasant class, speak of himself as a peculiarly kind and civilized husband, because he allowed his wife to eat with him. "Instead," said he, "of standing while I eat, with a glass of water in her hand to wait on me, I let her sit down and eat at my side—and our little black slave also!" he added (evidently showing that he made no great difference).

In the hareems, I believe, the women are never suffered to eat with their lord; however, the Fellaheen are less exclusive, and, in general, all take their supper together. When the meal is over, those who are of respectability always have a tin or brass basin and ewer brought by the wife or daughter, or by a slave, if they have one, and water is poured over their hands—a very necessary proceeding, certainly, after eating with the fingers; but, among the common people, the ceremony is often dispensed with.

Their supper consists of vegetables, cooked with a little butter into a sort of soup or stew; or of pulse of various kinds. On festival occasions, meat is always partaken of, and also every day in the fast-month, by all who can possibly afford it—or rather, every night. I recollect

once visiting a Fellah family, in a village near Cairo, during that period ; and found the women engaged in cooking, in preparation for the welcome sunset hour, when the long abstinence might be broken ; and, accustomed as I was to the frugal habits of the people in general, I was amazed at the quantity they had made ready, for the party only consisted (so they told me) of the man, with his wife and mother, a young brother, and a little child. The mother was making balls of meat, pounded or chopped, with a little seasoning ; and had filled a vessel, such as they use for washing, with the immense piles of this dainty, while the daughter had prepared a *mountain* of beans, which she was going to boil as an accompaniment ; and the flaps of new-baked bread seemed sufficient for a regiment of soldiers. But it is only in “Rhamadan,” or on extraordinary occasions, that they indulge in this manner. Their usual fare is simple, and they are by no means given to excess.

The Fellaheen, like all Egyptians, are good-natured and hospitable in regard to food, and always offer a share to any one who may come to see them, or even to a passer-by, when eating ; and I have seen poor boys frequently dividing

anything given to them with several comrades, though it might be but a mouthful for each. We had a most pleasing instance of this kindly feeling some little time ago in our school. A poor boy, a Copt, was left by his family in town, for some months, totally unprovided for (though they had agreed to supply him with the means of buying food, if we let him sleep with our servants in the court). We were not aware for a long while that his friends had neglected to send the remittances, as he never complained; but on inquiry, it appeared that the boys in the school, his companions, both Copts and Moslems, clubbed together to give him daily food constantly, from the dinners they brought with them; and he gratefully acknowledged this, saying, "Thank God, I have always had enough! The boys are very kind."

The habit of sharing with others is so general in respect of food, that it is observed even among young children, and is certainly a very pleasing trait.

The Moslem Fellah has probably performed his evening devotions before supper, spreading a cloak or carpet on the ground, and going through the formula with as much rapidity as is con-

sistent with solemnity of manner. We cannot but honour the conscientious performance of religious observances when addressed to the true God; but we must lament that the prayer is really a string of epithets, rather than a supplication to the Most High. How far more acceptable to the Father of Lights would be a single cry from the heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" As to the women, it is very rare indeed for one of them to pray. They suppose that it would be useless. They do not know the long string of words used by their people, and as they are unlearned, the whole ceremony is (except with a few) entirely dispensed with; and the only way in which they ever name the Almighty, is by incessantly taking His name in vain in ejaculations, of whose profanity, poor creatures, they are not aware! Night draws on, and they creep into their huts, as the animal into its den, without thanksgiving or repentance; and, rolling themselves and their babies on the mat, or on a thin cotton mattress, fall asleep.

In the hot nights of summer, many sleep out of doors; and certainly it would seem to give the best chance for sleep, as, in that season, even night brings little coolness. Still, that little is

more attainable outside than within walls; but foreigners are warned not to attempt the plan, unless in the dry desert, as it is apt to give fever to any but children of the soil.

Thus I have given a brief and imperfect sketch of the life of the humbler classes of Egypt, as it has come under my observation. In many respects they probably retain the customs and ways of their ancestors far more than is the case in Northern climes; and some of these we should be sorry to see changed—only such as are merely the consequence of ignorance and degradation. And, most of all, we should wish to see the poor Fellah, as he patiently plods through the burden and heat of the day, learning to know Him who said, “Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will refresh you!”

CHAPTER IV.

BREAD CAST ON THE WATERS.

EVERY one who comes to Egypt goes up the Nile, so that accounts of Nile voyages are only too plentiful; but these are two months' voyages at the least, and full of accounts of the marvellous antiquities of Thebes and Luxor. Few of the travellers have time to see anything of the habits and ways of the people beyond a passing glimpse, and if they lingered among the mud huts (which have little to tempt the eye it must be allowed), want of knowledge of the language would restrict their observations to the meagre and by no means very reliable details gained by the interpretation of a servant. The Christian traveller often longs to be able to say something to comfort the afflicted and instruct the ignorant; and when giving, perhaps, a little eye-water for the diseased, who come to beg for it, he longs to be able to tell of One who opened

the eyes of the blind, and who still gives sight to the blind in heart and understanding: and would be glad to have a faithful and trusty interpreter—such as one really acquainted with God's work alone *can be*—to speak for him. To travellers of this description, and perhaps some others who love to hear of the sowing of the seed “beside all waters,” these brief extracts, taken from journals written at the time, will not be devoid of interest. The names of the villages and towns are not given for certain reasons, but all are upon the great river, which is thickly inhabited on its banks.

It was the last week in January (1870), our little party were on the river for our yearly trip of two or three weeks. The old Nile looked more like a sea than a river, for the inundation that August had been uncommonly great; in fact, it had done much damage, destroying many villages on the low grounds, and the *durra*, or maize, had perished in most places. The effect now, however, was beautiful; the wide reaches of the river shimmering in the bright sunshine, were delightful to the eye, and the sunset such as an artist's heart would rejoice in; the water-fowl disporting on the calm surface of the water,

tinged alternately with crimson, gold, and pale green; and the palm groves, with their purple shadows and feathery boughs, standing out against an *apricot* sky, form a picture simple enough in outline, and sometimes even monotonous, but unsurpassed in colouring.

In the middle of the day one might almost fancy it summer, so warm and genial were the rays of the sun, but the mornings and evenings were really cold, especially to persons accustomed to the heat prevailing the greater part of the year in Egypt. The winter cold is short indeed; but while it lasts the natives seem to feel it a good deal, and no wonder, especially the peasant women, who are very ill protected by their thin cotton raiment from a chill wind. In the country, clothing is expensive and difficult to procure, and the women come down to draw water just before sunset, actually chattering and shivering with cold as their loose robes and thin veils flutter in the cold breeze, and the water washes over their bare ankles, and often up to their knees, while standing to wash the great heavy pitchers, which are then filled and carried away on their heads. Some would glance admiringly, and perhaps enviously, poor things! at our warm woollen

shawls and knitted hoods ; but it doubtless never occurred to them that the silver bracelets and gold coins which adorned the arms and throats of most of them would have purchased a whole wardrobe of warm clothing !

The men, on the other hand, are generally more or less provided with winter comforts, in the shape of great brown mantles of undyed wool, spun by their own fingers from the fleeces of their dark-coloured sheep ; and we frequently see a group of sturdy peasants at the close of the day, or during their mid-day's rest, sitting on the bank of the river or in some sunny spot, each with his primitive spindle dangling from his hands.

How often we have tried to interest such groups in the words of eternal life, and have sat in the midst of them till the last rays of light were gone, and the grey shadows of evening replacing the golden glow over the Nile ! Nor can we feel that the efforts have been wasted, though it is only in a very few cases that we have been enabled to meet the same persons again, and though we are far from imagining that the listening to a short portion of Scripture necessarily *implies* a deep and lasting impression. Does it in more civilized lands ? Is it not everywhere more or less the

same? Of many who listen few receive the Word into the good ground of an honest heart. And of course the difficulties in the way of both hearers and instructors are trebly great in a country like this, where the peasantry are so averse to anything of change, and so easily made angry or frightened by whatever savours to them of novelty or of opposition to old habits and customs. Untried zeal expects abundant success against every probability, and sometimes tires and withdraws; when facts prove that the more ignorant people are, the more obstinate they are also, and the more indifferent to instruction; but *faith* can hope on, and labour on, under every hindrance, remembering that there is joy in heaven if one sinner repents, out of a hundred who *think* that they need no repentance.

I was reflecting on these matters while making my way over a ploughed field on the bank of the river, towards a collection of mud huts, which ranked as a village (and rather a large one). The difficulties alluded to were still greater in my case, for my fellow-labourers had the advantage of similarity of language (Arabic being the national tongue of Syria as well as of Egypt, as most people are aware). I had the hindrance

of being a foreigner in speech, often unable adequately to express all I wished, and sometimes unable to fully understand the rapid and idiomatic questions of my audience; these auditors too, being female, were always far inferior in knowledge and (generally speaking) in intelligence to the men, being married as mere children, and their mental powers early stunted by daily drudgery and a life of utter monotony. Among such women a stranger finds it no easy task to make any way; but love to souls is a strong motive and sometimes wins an opening of the heart's door when no other key would have a chance. And now and then a ray of light shines out to cheer us amid the darkness. Our first halting-place this year had no particular interest, but in the next there was something worth recording in the humble annals of the voyage. While both the missionaries were gone to different villages a little inland, I was sketching some palms near the shore, expecting that I should soon have company, as proved to be the case. First only a few children, ragged and dirty, but bright-eyed and funny, peeping round, and wondering what the "Frank woman" could be "writing trees" or! Then came several women, and seated

themselves around me on the ground; and when I had got fairly into conversation with them, and obtained their leave to read "a story out of my book" to them, the party was increased by several men. In town the women would have immediately decamped or veiled their faces, but here they seemed quite unconcerned, and not one of the bronzed, healthy faces was hidden; only (as usual when men are among them) I could not induce them to answer questions without much trouble; they seem to suppose that it is manners to keep silence when their lords are present, unless it be a matter of business, in which case their tongues would run fast enough.

Among the four or five men who had come to sit with the group which was collected round the fallen palm on whose stem I was seated, was a very intelligent, pleasant-looking man of middle age, who asked several questions about our boat, and where we resided, etc. When he heard about the schools in Cairo, he was greatly interested: he was, he told me, a teacher himself; but in a poor village like this, where the boys were needed for hand labour as soon as they could walk almost, his pupils were but very few—about ten I think he said. He asked some rather curious questions,

but the naïveté of his manner, and his open honest face, showed that his inquisitiveness did not proceed from impertinence, but simplicity. When he was satisfied in some degree, he turned to the book I held, and begged to see it. I was quite willing, on the condition that he would read a portion aloud; for I observed, "These women will follow your reading much better than that of a foreigner." He read with a fine voice and clear enunciation part of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, but presently paused and said, not angrily but gravely, "God forbid this word—Son of God! Why do you have this word?" I endeavoured to explain the meaning to him, and he seemed to see it in a new light, but not to be perfectly satisfied. So also on reading in another place of the death of Christ, he objected, saying, "The Jews wanted to kill Seidna Eessa (the Lord Jesus), but far be it from him that the Lord Eessa should die! This would be *shame*."

I thought of Peter's words, "Be it far from thee, Lord!" almost the very same, and felt that the "offence of the cross" is still a difficulty among many. The thought of a *crucified* Redeemer is against the pride of man; and even those who deny his Divinity, revolt at the idea of

the death, without which the Gospel is vain. I tried to show this to the teacher, saying, "My brother, if Jesus did not die, you and I must die eternally. We must be punished by everlasting death for our sins unless the holy and sinless One suffered death for us sinners. God's justice and love met together in Jesus." He showed his white teeth in a smile of doubtful meaning at this, but presently resumed the discussion seriously. Several of the others now went away, having no taste for grave talk; the remainder seemed interested. I brought forward some simple illustrations to show the need of atonement for man, and at the same time warned my new friend that being a stranger, and not perfect in his language, my arguments might not seem clear to him on this account, but that if he really wished to understand this great truth, he could come to our boat and he would see the gentlemen who were now gone to a distant village, but would shortly return, and they could far better explain it to him. He wished to know if he could procure a book like this, and of course I told him we had several on board. "I know," he said, "there are four books called Matthew, Mark, and John, and another which I forget. I

much wish to procure them, and never have been able." I suggested Luke as the fourth. "Yes, yes ; that is it. Have you all those?" "Certainly, and more beside," was the reply. He had probably heard of the four Gospels from some Coptic acquaintance, but his wishing to possess them was a sign of unusual liberality and intelligence. I now read one or two stories from the Gospel suited to the limited powers of the poor women, and then having no more time to stay, returned to the boat, and was glad to see the teacher following me. We found Mr. Shakoor just returned, and he invited the man on board the "Daha-beeyeh," or Nile-boat. I found afterwards that he had business on the opposite coast, and a small boat was actually waiting to take him, but he sent a friend to say he would not go, and the boat sailed without him. It is not often an Egyptian will sacrifice a worldly affair, if it be but to gain twenty *pavas*, for spiritual information and intellectual acquaintance. So we were much interested in this poor man, who stayed nearly two hours on the deck, reading chapter after chapter, and asking questions and receiving answers. It was well he had one to reply to his difficulties and objections who was fully acquainted with the Koran, and who

knew all the ways of the people. He left us at length, professing himself satisfied with the explanation given him of the expressions that had so puzzled him, and carrying a Testament under his arm, and accompanied by earnest prayers. So he went on his way, and we continued our voyage.

Our next visit was to a place of more consequence than the mud villages, and where we had a slight acquaintance with some Copts, among others a priest, whose wife I had formerly visited (the Coptic secular priests like those of the Greek Church, are married, as some of my readers may be aware). The wives have usually no more education than their neighbours, nor are they in any way superior to artisans' wives in the arrangements of their dwellings, or their own dress, etc. The only perceptible difference was a greater respect for learning, and for the name at least of the Scripture.

The wife and her sister received me very cordially, and insisted on spreading the bed, by way of a sofa, for a seat ; which, though the mud floor would have been preferable, I could not refuse. They listened with apparent interest to some reading from the Gospel, and the wife actually promised to ask her husband to teach

her to read, on my suggestion. She already knew her letters, which he had taught her, and she declared he would not be unwilling to give her further teaching. I gave her some printed Arabic texts as an assistance, and we had some conversation about the great concerns of life and death, which the recent loss of an infant made especially suitable, as the poor young woman's mind seemed softened by her late trouble, and touched by friendly sympathy. I was going to take leave when she urged me to partake of their breakfast (it was only nine o'clock), and in fact would not take a refusal; and I did not like to hurt her feelings, or appear too proud to sit down with them—though to a European the fare was not served up in a very tempting manner—nothing being *clean* about it. A small round tray was brought by the eldest girl, who, young as her mother looked, was at least ten years old, and put on a low stool, round which the females present seated themselves on the floor (the men did not eat with them; I think the priest was not come from church). A dish of fried eggs, and another of sour curds, were then placed on it, with a heap of dark-coloured thin loaves, or *flaps*, of native bread; and every one

took up a bit with a piece of this to assist the fingers. After the meal, the girl brought a tin basin and ewer with a long spout, and a piece of cotton for a towel, and each washed her hands, as is the custom in all Oriental families save those mere peasants, or very poor, who simply lick their fingers after eating, but no one who has the least pretensions to propriety fails to wash in the way described; the servant—if there is one, and if not, the youngest of the party—carrying round the water, etc.

I tried to get the two sisters to come and visit us at our “Dahabeeyeh;” but though they seemed to think it would be a pleasant change, especially the widow, who told us how much she wished it—they dared not venture on what would shock all their family. No women of that class, nor any except the poorest peasants, went out of their houses save to the church or bath, or very rarely to market. The Copts are, indeed, even more shut up than the Mohammedans, unless where a dawning education has induced the head of a family to relax the strict seclusion a little. So I had to take leave of my friends at the mud steps of their abode, and returned alone to the shore.

At another place we were delayed by contrary

winds, on a part of the coast we had not hitherto tried, as there was no village on the river banks. Being detained there by necessity for a whole day, we resolved to go a little way inland and see if any people in the hamlets within a mile or two would receive books. In spite of a high wind, the walk was pleasant, being through fields of luxuriant clover and green corn, such as refresh the senses of those whose lot it is to dwell in a town. In the distance the yellow cliffs of the desert appeared in view, while clumps of trees dotted about the landscape, showed where villages existed. The first of these was only a cluster of huts, connected with a large "abadeeyeh," or farm, whose bailiff saluted us civilly, and made no objection to our visiting his workpeople. A number of Bedouin tents were pitched on one side of the mud huts of the labourers, and I was informed that these belonged to a tribe who were temporarily employed as watchmen over the crops and cattle during a certain part of the year. This is customary in villages or farms bordering on the desert, but the wandering race rarely mix with the peasants by intermarriages, and preserve all their old customs, or most of them, unchanged, probably from the time of Ishmael.

Their tents of black goats'-hair are preferable to any ceiled dwelling in their eyes, and the men still wear the raiment of camel's-hair and girdle of leather, which was worn by John the Baptist, who no doubt assumed the garb of the wandering Arab during his residence in the deserts, as suitable to that rough mode of life.

The Bedouin women have generally the same dark blue or black cotton robe as that worn by the *fellaheen*, or peasant women, but they are distinguished by face veils of either crimson or white crape instead of a black one; these coverings are short, barely reaching to the chin, and most of them are fringed with coins of silver; their hair is either cut short on the forehead, or else the long plaits are twisted into a sort of horn just over the eyebrows, which has a very curious effect.

I found two Bedouin women sitting among the Egyptians, one of whom was a pretty young woman, and evidently intelligent. In spite of the young children who swarmed around the little circle (and who tried in every way to hinder any one but themselves from being attended to), I managed at length to get a hearing, and, having satisfied the curiosity of the poor women about my dress, why I wore "several

dresses," as they expressed it, and what was the use of a "thing made of straw on the head, when straw every one knew was only food for cattle?" and, above all, why I did not wear any jewels. These and other questions being disposed of, we got into real conversation about more important matters. "She can read Arabic and says good words, therefore she is certainly a Moslem," said one of the Bedouin women aside to a neighbour. "No," said the other, "I think she is a Copt." "I am a follower of the Messiah," I replied to these overheard remarks, "and He is the Holy One of God, the Saviour of the world. He did not come for one sect only, but for all mankind. If we do not believe in Him, this is either from our sin, or else that we do not know Him; not from want of love in Himself." I went on to say that the Gospel was good news, and that I would try and show them what it meant, and explained in the simplest words the forgiveness of sin through a dying and risen Saviour.

One poor, ignorant old creature said, "These words are so good that I think if you would lend me your book to lay on my forehead it would cure my headache, which troubles me all the day!" It was impossible to restrain a smile at

this foolish idea, but after all, is not the blessed Gospel thus degraded by superstition in Ireland and elsewhere, when scraps of it are sewed in a bag and used as charms by the Roman Catholic peasantry, under the sanction of those who ought to teach them better? I endeavoured of course to show the true use of good words. The poor Bedouin woman listened with apparently sincere interest. She asked if I prayed, and on being answered in the affirmative, turned triumphantly to one sitting behind her, "There! did I not tell you?" The poor people have no idea that any except members of Islam ever pray, and therefore she thought I must belong to them if I could pray. I told her the true nature of prayer did not consist in a string of words with little meaning attached, nor even in praise; "it is true," I said, "that we should praise God for his greatness and his goodness, but prayer needs that we *ask* for something we wish for, and that from the very heart, not by the lips only." "I never heard these things before," said the young Bedouin; "no one told me, and I am not learned!" How sorrowful such words make one feel when the opportunity of teaching is so short, for even could I be sure of returning to the spot next

year, the same tribe would not, in all probability, be found there; they go to various places each year, I was told, and wander in the desert again as soon as their occupation in keeping watch over the cattle during the season of clover is ended. I could only pray for the poor child of the desert; and I told her that I did so, asking the Lord then and there to have mercy on her, and give her pardon and peace through the Saviour. In a few simple words she bade me an affectionate farewell, for the sinking sun now warned us to be up and going. The men—one or two Bedouins among them—had meantime been grouped round Mr. Shakoor at a little distance, listening to a chapter of the Gospel, while their wives were occupied with me. We had to hasten back as the wind was high; and in Egypt, when the winter sun has set, a sudden cold often sets in, such as M. About describes, in his graphic way, “as a mantle of lead falling suddenly on the shoulders, and then,” he adds, “there is no time to lose in getting under shelter.”

CHAPTER V.

EGYPTIAN MARRIAGES.

THERE are few greater hindrances to the spread of education in the East than the early ages at which marriages are contracted. In Cairo the evils of the system have come under my observation so frequently in my constant intercourse with the people, especially the humbler classes, that I can speak feelingly on the subject. It is true Eastern children are a little forwarder for their age than those in the North: they walk sooner, and are rather older-looking than the average of *English* children at any rate, perhaps of Northern Europeans generally; but the difference is much less than is often supposed—a year or two is all the advantage you could give them, and an Egyptian of twelve is just as unfit, either in bodily strength or by mental development, to be the head of a family, as any other girl of that age would be. In fact, she is treated

as a child in many respects, and not in general trusted with money, nor with any authority in the dwelling—her mother-in-law reigns there, and in the families of the poor she is often quite a drudge to the old woman for the first years of her married life.

There seems little difference in this respect between the habits of the Copts (who, as is well known, are the remnant of the ancient Egyptian Christians) and the Mohammedans, who—consisting of those who conformed to the faith of their fierce invaders, and doubtless mixed with those invaders—are the larger number.

The ceremonies are, of course, different at Coptic and Moslem bridals, but the important point is that in which they both agree—namely, that the girl is to be disposed of as early as possible, and without the slightest reference to her own wishes or feelings.

The Moslem weddings are conducted in the day-time; that is to say, the actual ceremony of bringing the bride and bridegroom before the *Mollah*, and reading some paper in presence of witnesses. A procession through the streets precedes this, which is always a grand affair even among the poor, as neighbours and friends are

assembled, and walk after the canopy which is held over the bride; a band of music, in which the native drum has the pre-eminence, accompanies the troop, and mingles its joyous though rather discordant sounds with the shrill but sweet *zagareet* of the women (a peculiar sound made in the throat resembling small bells, and exceedingly difficult to imitate by anyone not early accustomed to it). The canopy held over the bride is of red silk fastened to four poles, and she walks within it surrounded by her mother and older female friends, while the bridesmaids, generally mere children, sometimes so young as to be unveiled, walk or skip in front of her; they are always dressed in red or pink, the quality and material according to their means.

Prints and pictures professing to represent Eastern bridal processions sometimes represent the bride as only sheltered by a flowing veil, her features quite visible; but, at least in Egypt, this is quite incorrect; she has not even the eyes exposed, as is the case with the women on all other occasions, who wear a black or white covering tied *under* the eyes, hiding nose and mouth only, but the bride is entirely covered, head and face and dress, by a large red shawl; an elabo-

rate ornament of diamonds (*hired* if they are poor) is placed outside upon her head. The effect is that of an idol exactly, and the sensation to the poor victim must be very disagreeable if the weather is hot (which is the case for seven months in the year), as the procession takes place in the middle of the day, and they walk as slowly as possible all the time! Some of the wealthy now employ carriages at weddings, and even those who are in moderate circumstances are beginning to use them. In the evening they have another kind of procession, consisting only of men. I believe it is the bridegroom being conducted to the bride's house; this is exceedingly picturesque, the friends who accompany the young man being all provided with lighted tapers and large bouquets of roses, jessamine, or orange flowers; and if it is the marriage of a tradesman who is in good circumstances, the show is quite beautiful, the lights glowing fitfully in the dark streets, and falling here and there upon the rich coloured caftans, crimson, orange, green, and purple—the snowy turbans contrasting well with these bright hues; the bridegroom, however, usually wears a turban of some fine shawl, and is dressed very handsomely. A curious chant is at intervals sung,

in which prosperity is wished to the new couple, mingling with this many appeals to God and their Prophet, according to custom. Among the very poor much less ceremony is necessarily used, and, to save expense, some will actually prefer taking a divorced woman as a bride, because no procession, music, etc., is then required, and the whole is conducted privately and quietly ! The Coptic wedding festivities bear some resemblance to those of the ancient Jewish times, and are, therefore, very interesting to witness ; a feast forms a great part of the concern, in which food is liberally distributed to the poor, if the families to be united are at all of a wealthy class ; but the prettiest part of the scene is the night procession, in which the bride, attired in silk and jewels (usually white brocade and diamonds with plenty of gold ornaments—hired, if her family are not very rich), is conducted to her husband's house, after the marriage ceremony in the Coptic church is over. The women—except the bride and her little bridesmaids, who are as gay as butterflies—are all in their black shrouding mantles, which hide the rich garments within while they are in the streets ; but the men are in every variety of colours, as with the Mohammedans ;

and the torches gleaming as they pass, the boy carrying incense in a silver vessel, and the joyous groups winding through the narrow streets and under dark archways, is beautiful and striking. Both this and the nightly procession of the Mohammedan Egyptians vividly recall the Scripture allusions, especially when standing at a window to look out one hears the frequent cry, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!" but it makes a *believer* think with painful interest of the dark spiritual condition of the actors in these gay scenes, who know so little of such Scriptures, and it makes his heart long for them to be better prepared to meet that heavenly Bridegroom whose coming *may* be near, and which is, by God's wisdom, hidden from us, so that we know not if it shall be at morning or evening, or midnight, or at the cock-crowing!

But let us now see what sort of being the young bride is for whose marriage all this festivity takes place. We speak specially of the young Moslem. We know she is a child, but not exactly such a child as would be found in a corresponding class in Europe—at any rate, in Northern Europe. There a girl of twelve years old is in a state of progress, an unfinished crea-

ture mentally ; whereas in Egypt she has to grow in body only. Her few acquirements have been attained already. She has no object in improving, and no one to show her what improvement means, all around being alike ignorant. One day she will be married, and there will be feasting, and drums, and fine dress. She knows *that* ; and if some troubles follow, some beatings from the husband, and other domestic annoyances, they are inevitable, and she is too young to look forward much.

The little bride knows how to knead bread and sift corn, etc. ; in *some* cases to sew, in a coarse style also ; and she is up in all the gossip of her quarter. Beyond this her mind is a blank, and so is that of her grandmother of sixty ; the only great difference is, that the old woman is more full of superstitions and prejudices, and likes to squat in a corner of her room, or at the door (if of the poorer class, in the dust-heap of the lane), with a long pipe, rather than to romp with the girls, as her grand-daughter does. It is only an old child and a young child, as far as mind goes. But physically the difference is much greater than the difference between age and youth must be everywhere. Old age, when

not softened by the habits of civilization, the cleanly garments and the self-respect and dignity which so become declining years; and yet more, the light of Christianity, which can brighten the evening of life like the rays of the setting sun, when it sets in golden clouds only to rise in another hemisphere!—age, without these, or *any* of these, is not pleasing to look at. In Egypt woman is despised and made a slave of from her youth up; and what wonder that her age is generally most unlovely? Exposure and utter want of cleanliness increase the natural effect of time, and her leathern face and wrinkled throat, unshaded by muslin kerchief or shawl, her rough, grizzled locks peeping from under a coarse black muslin veil, look as unlike the slender, graceful creature at her side, as two human beings can be one to the other. Yet that nut-brown maiden, with her clear black eye and laughing face, showing her rows of milk-white teeth, as even and pure as few but Egyptian teeth are, and her rounded arms and delicately-formed fingers playing with her veil of rose-coloured net (if it chance to be a festival, and she is in the glory of her new clothes)—that very Zeynab, or Zohrah, or Saida, will turn into just

such a shabby, miserable-looking old thing, before she has seen fifty years probably !

In some we see the remains of really fine and regular features, but these are exceptional as in most countries. In general, fine eyes and teeth, and a very pretty figure, are the dower of an Egyptian maiden ; but, when these are gone, nothing but wrinkles, dirt, and bleary eyes are to be seen peering out of a shapeless mass of limp, dark-blue rags, huddled on without care one over the other. Occasionally a kindly old face looks up from the threshold where she is crouched, and a cheerful, civil salutation shows the pleasant nature ; but, as a *rule*, the old women are my greatest trials among the poor—so obstinate, so dirty, so prejudiced, and so silly—poor old creatures ! The young are the *hope*, certainly ; but the old are like a strong rope dragging them the wrong way. It is hardly needful to observe that I am speaking of the humbler class in these remarks ; but they include many respectable persons.

The early age at which the girls are married is, as I said above, one of the greatest hindrances in the way of female education ; for to get at them, when married, as *pupils*, is quite impos-

sible. Some little good may be done by keeping up occasional intercourse, but anything like *regular* instruction is rarely permitted. In fact, both with Moslems and Copts, the seclusion of young married women is greater than any other. While girls, a considerable amount of freedom is given, and when middle-aged also; but the young wife is often forbidden to stir beyond her own doors, except to go to the bath, and beaten by her mother-in-law if she dares to disobey. A nice young woman—who comes, at long intervals, to see the school, where she was a scholar only for three months—told me that it was a great favour when her mother-in-law allowed her to accompany a relative's child who came to school; and as to visiting me weekly, as I proposed, she shook her head at the very idea as something out of the question. The difficulty is not quite so great with Coptic pupils, as, though they are as secluded as Moslems if they belong to the old-fashioned set, there are some who are getting more enlightened. One of my former teachers was actually left in my employment till long past the usual age of marriage—in fact, she could not have been less than nineteen; her bridegroom being of the same age

as herself, she was very willing to wait, and it turned out well ; but the father, fearing ridicule, gave out that she was but *sixteen*. I believe they all knew better—but it *sounded* less like an “old maid” !

This young woman insisted on coming to visit us after three weeks, instead of submitting to be locked up for six months at the *least*, according to old Coptic usage. Now, after more than two years, the young couple continue to go on better than many others. The husband frequently reads to his family in the Scriptures ; and the wife, now a mother, is a little more independent in her own department than is at all common.

The Coptic brides often get on very badly with their husbands, especially in the early part of their life. Being so unfit, from their extreme youth, for the position into which they are forced, they are quarrelsome, and not unfrequently insist on going back to stay with their parents for a long time ; but, sooner or later, the quarrels are usually patched up, and they get to bear with each other somehow, as the Coptic law is praiseworthy in its strictness concerning marriage, and nothing but grossly immoral conduct would make a divorce possible.

The poor Moslems are far more defenceless, therefore, for *their* law, as we all know, allows of divorce on the most trivial pretext. A man may drive away his wife for anything or nothing ; and the lower orders, who cannot afford to avail themselves of their Prophet's permission to marry several at once, are sadly given to send one away and take another, as if the mother of their children were no better than a hireling ; nay, worse, for except her *own* dowry and jewels, if she have any, she goes away without wages and without notice ! I think their consciences, seared though they are, feel this to be wrong, as those few who have remained faithful to each other boast of it as a good thing. " I am not like such a one, nor is my husband," said the mother of one of our pupil-teachers ; " we have never been married to any one else !" But the tie is of course very differently looked upon from what it is even among nominal Christians. One day Mr. Shakoor was reading to a group of peasants from the Gospel, and one of them begged him to read some passage on the duties of *wives*, for the benefit of his who was within hearing, and with whom, it seemed, he had just been disputing ; " for," said he, " when I tell her to do one

thing she does another." He listened attentively, praised the exhortation to obedience, etc., which was given from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, in answer to his request; but afterwards Mr. Shakoor read of the duties of *husbands*, and especially what was said by our Lord against sending away their wives, accompanying it with explanation, and showing them how sinful and unfeeling their common practice was. "But," said the man, "you surely don't mean that there is *no* case in which a wife may be rightly divorced, even if not wicked; for example, if she became *blind* one would be right to drive her away; do you not think so?" He was astonished to be told that, on the contrary, such a misfortune ought to call out his tenderest care, and that they should bear the affliction together, instead of turning out the unhappy woman because she was afflicted! Does not this anecdote show the way in which marriage is looked on among the Moslems? There are, doubtless, exceptions, but this is the *common* feeling among the mass of the people, judging from what I hear as well as from observation.

The effect on the children of the frequent separation of their parents may be imagined;

brothers and sisters early parted—a step-father and step-mother while their own are still alive,—the little ones sometimes residing with one parent and sometimes the other, not unfrequently quarrelled for; sometimes one desirous of sending the girls to our school and the other hindering, merely because, being divorced, they dislike each other and wish contrary things. Such and many other evils arise from this wretched state. A young woman of the poorest class met me the other day, and, saluting me, showed me her infant daughter. I asked after her husband. “I am divorced,” she said. “What had you done that he should send you away?” (she had only been married a year). “He did not want a girl and this child is a girl; what can I do?” This poor thing is now living on a pittance allowed her by her father, which barely keeps her and the child (now able to walk) above starvation; as she had no dowry and no jewels, she had no other resource unless to marry again, which she declared herself unwilling to do, having had enough experience in that line, but probably if she had a good offer she would be thankful to accept it. There is little employment open to women in general, as long as they are

young especially; some sell vegetables, etc., in the streets, but the market is overstocked with these, and a solitary woman finds it hard to support herself. Domestic service is performed by slaves (mostly negresses) or by hired men; those who cannot afford either, do their own work. But among the Copts slaves are so universal that even a hired servant will usually buy a black woman to wait on his wife who is moped and sickly from want of occupation and exercise! The other evils of slavery are numerous enough, I need hardly observe; the hindrance it makes to the most useful employment for women, is only one among many. Among Moslems slaves are common with the rich, of course, but the lower class do not as often keep them as the Copts, and their wives and daughters do the work (simple enough it generally is) of the house. The bride in this class has a brief time of honour and amusement, not a month, but a few days only, before she enters on her tasks of fetching water in her great jar from the canal or river, kneading bread, etc. If her mother-in-law and husband are kind it is very well, but she has no freedom and is really no better off than a slave until the old

woman has died or become too feeble to trouble her; but the husband beats her with a stick for the least offence, and as people are apt to get worse the worse they are treated, it is, I fear, but seldom that the poor bride does not become more degraded when she is a wife than she was in the short days of her merry thoughtless girlhood. Oh! what crying necessity is there in Egypt for education and the blessed light of the Gospel! Much failure and very partial success indeed may be expected under such peculiarly difficult circumstances; but if some be rescued, if some homes become brighter, some families happier, and, above all, if some learn to know and love the Word of God, no labour will have been too great for such a result, and perhaps some among the children so earnestly prayed for and instructed may be found in the happy number of those who wait for the heavenly Bridegroom's call, and when the joyful cry resounds, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" may be among those who will answer, "We are ready."

CHAPTER VI.

KHALEEL AND HIS MOTHER.

THE following sketch was noted down about three years ago. I was one day summoned to meet two poor women, who requested to see me in a great hurry; and found in the hall two dark-veiled and shrouded females, whom naturally I could not recognize till they uncovered their faces. Then appeared an old and a young person—the latter a comely, vigorous woman of the name of Hasna, who had been a next-door neighbour when I lived in the small corner house of Abou-bekr, a lane leading out of the long street of Bab-el-Bahr, to which the school was subsequently removed. This woman had been ill with a low fever for some time, and thought she owed her recovery to some remedies I had given her. She had made a solemn promise, at the time, that her eldest child, then an infant, should be sent to my school as soon as able to

speak ; and accordingly she came before she was quite three years old. The present visit, however, had no reference to little Zeynab, but to her husband's younger brother, who was dangerously ill ; and she had persuaded her mother-in-law to come with her and ask me to go down and see the sufferer, and tell them if anything could be done. From their description, it seemed a case of dropsy of a rapid kind, and not a hopeful one, especially for an unprofessional visitor, to attempt ; but I went with them immediately, and was taken to an inner room (for though of the poorer class, they were not of the lowest, by any means, and occupied a tolerable house with two or three rooms). Here I saw the invalid, a lad of about seventeen, lying on an old mattress, and rolled up in a quantity of garments, in the hope that heat might alleviate his pain ; but to me it seemed only to aggravate the misery and discomfort, as everything was dirty in the extreme.

It was clear, after some questions and examination, that already mortification had begun to set in, and that, when this reached vital places, death must quickly follow ; nor could anything probably have arrested it. They resolutely

declined to call in a doctor, either European or native; but were willing to let me offer any remedy or alleviation I chose. The pain in the chest being acute, I gave them a soothing liniment containing opium to rub in; and a temporary relief being obtained, I proposed to read something from God's Word to the poor lad, if his mother did not object.

"By all means read," said she. "It will amuse him, and divert his mind a little."

I therefore took out my Arabic Testament, and read several portions, selecting the simplest and most likely to attract one totally ignorant of Gospel truth; and paused to explain every now and then, and to see if he appeared to take in the meaning. After about an hour's visit, as he seemed inclined to sleep, I took leave, promising to call next day. It was impossible to give hope of recovery; but the mixture of fatalism and hopefulness in the mind of a Moslem peasant is curious to see. The mother repeated—

"God is great! My son, perhaps, will be much better soon; perhaps he may recover. God and the Prophet can alone tell. Who knows?"

I came early the following day, and found

little change except that the livid spots on the back had slightly increased, and the pain was diminished. I asked Khaleel (so I found he was named) if I should again read to him, and he assented willingly. I now took the first chapter of John's Gospel, and after reading it, returned to the 29th verse, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," and endeavoured to show the meaning. The hindrance of a foreign language, and one so exceedingly difficult to a European tongue as the Arabic, would have been felt in some degree by even a better scholar than I could pretend to be; still the habit of reading and explaining to the children at school had given a certain familiarity with Scripture phrases and with the interpretations necessary to give in dealing with the ignorant, especially the Moham-medans. I had not a man of education to contend with, the poor boy could not read even in his own Koran, and only knew what all the lower class know generally of the tenets of their religion, added to a number of foolish legends. But the ignorant are usually more or less bigoted, and this family being among the so-called descendants of the Prophet, were likely to be par-

ticularly so. It was strange that they even permitted a Christian to visit and read freely to the invalid, but the memory of kindness is often a key to unlock the door that would otherwise be shut, and Hasna, the sister-in-law, had not forgotten her illness, though it was two years ago. So no objection was made to my visits, which were repeated every day for a week. I frequently returned to the 29th verse of the first chapter of John's Gospel, and tried to explain the nature and intention of sacrifice, showing that the Moslem festival in which they slay a lamb with some ceremonies every year, is in fact a remnant of the old Jewish sacrifice, and how useless all such must be when the sacrifice of Christ has taken place, of which those were emblems and figures. Then I tried to show why a Saviour was needed, and Khaleel fully avowed his own sinfulness, which many (I may say *most* of the uneducated) Moslems will not do—and I know little of any others; then I spoke of God's holiness and hatred of sin, whether great or small, and he allowed that he was not fit to face a holy God in himself.

Then came the connection between the sinner and the Saviour, and earnestly I prayed for and

with him, that the merciful and loving Jesus would give his Spirit to the dying one to see and believe that He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. When I stopped reading, he more than once looked up, and said, "Read, read!" He could speak little, and the difficulty increased with increasing weakness, but the eyes followed me with intelligence and interest not to be mistaken. One day I had been reading the history of Lazarus, with many interruptions from the female relatives who were present, and who were incessantly offering water to the sick youth, or asking him how he felt, or commenting aloud on his state, and the probable duration of his ebbing life! It was trying to the poor sufferer, who really wished to listen, and no less so to me, as I had to be constantly taking up the broken thread. At last some of them went away, and we were left in comparative peace with the old mother, who sat quietly crying in a corner, and the sister-in-law, who was tenderly wiping his brow with her muslin veil, and settling the cushion behind his head at intervals. I asked if he would like me to pray that God would have mercy on him, and as he said yes, making at the same time a sign of

assent with his head, I came close to him and pleaded earnestly with the Lord to save his soul, and give him eternal life for Christ's sake. When I ended I saw his eyes fixed on me with an intently listening expression, and he said quite distinctly, "Good!" "Have you much pain now?" I asked. "No, not any." I thought this a sign that his end was not very far off, and there was a dark shadow already on his young face, though he was as conscious as ever. "My son," I said (using the familiar Oriental appellation), "you are now passing through the valley of the shadow of death, but you know what David said (I had more than once read the 23rd Psalm to him) you can say also, 'I will fear no evil for *Thou* art with me,' only trust in the Lord Jesus, and fear not; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world will never forsake you; if you believe in Him you will soon leave pain and sorrow to enter the joy of paradise." He looked at me with a calm, happy expression, and gave a murmured assent; just then some neighbours began to crowd in, as their custom is always to disturb the dying or sick bed of friends as much as possible, with well-meant, but most ill-timed visits and noisy lamen-

tations. I thought it best to take leave as I could do no more good. Khaleel did not look as if he noticed the people or attended to them, but lay quiet and seemingly calm when I bade him farewell.

I learned afterwards, from a poor neighbour, that she found him alone or with only his mother shortly after my departure, and that he told her "the lady" had been with him reading, and had prayed, and said "such sweet words—such good words." He wished to say more, the woman added, but a fit of pain and suffocation came on, and he cried, "Oh, my heart—my heart," and began raising himself up and rocking himself feebly to and fro. Of course, the friends assembled quickly on this. Presently the pain ceased, and he lay quietly for a few moments, and then suddenly looked upwards, and exclaiming, "Oh, Lord, take me!" expired without a struggle. The expression seemed to have struck his friends as peculiar, and it was repeated to me as such. Literally, the word used would signify "cause me to follow thee, or go with me." Not till the last day can we know certainly whether or not this poor soul received the gospel, for bodily infirmity prevented his speaking except,

as I stated, in a few disjointed sentences, and he was also frequently interrupted and almost always watched by neighbours and relatives ; but I felt a strong hope that he was enabled to touch the hem of Christ's garment, as it were. I once read that history to him, and pointed out that as she who touched was made whole, so if he believed simply in the atoning death, he too would be cleansed from sin ; and I trust he did so. That he loved the gospel was evident from what the poor mother told me afterwards. Indeed, she gives no other title to the Testament I frequently bring to read to her but " the book my son loved."

I went to see her the day after his death, thinking it would be taken as a mark of kind feeling, and finding her not at home, asked a neighbour where she was. " Do you not know," she replied " that with us there are always three days of mourning? This is the second day, and Safea (the mother) is in the lane with all the women ; I am going also."

I followed her, and saw at least forty women all seated upon the ground, or on pieces of mat spread outside the doors of the houses in the lane ; no men were among them. I suppose the

father, with male companions, was in some other place. The women, all in their dark blue or black veils and mantles, with a handkerchief twisted in the hands of each, which they pulled and shook before them, were sobbing, sometimes screaming, wailing, and every now and then chanting, but the chant was constantly broken by shrieks and groans. They were not standing, as wailing women are often depicted in prints and pictures—the Orientals rarely stand for long together; and I observed every fresh comer, after standing a minute or two, saluting every one and uttering certain phrases of condolence, took her seat on the ground and commenced rocking herself to and fro. They looked at first surprised to see a European visitor, and some did not seem very well pleased; others, who were acquainted, saluted me; and the poor mother made me sit beside her, and taking both my hands, pressed them affectionately, while tears flowed down her wrinkled face abundantly, as she said, between her sobs, “He loved you; my son loved you; he loved your book. Oh, my son—my son!” I spoke tenderly to the poor creature, and when the violence of her grief was a little abated, read her one or two

texts from the gospel, such as appeared at once the most consolatory and easy to understand. A bigoted woman, who observed this, turned round and said in an angry, loud whisper, "Go away, who wants your books here? We are crying; we don't want books." I tried gently to explain that I wished to comfort Khaleel's mother by reading some words which he had liked to listen to, but she persisted rudely, saying, "Take away your Christian book; we are crying; we do not need any book, and yours is not good." It would only have made a disturbance to oppose her openly, as she was evidently of a violent temper, so I withdrew to the other side of the old mother, and shading the book with my shawl, finished the passage I was reading in a low voice to her, and then closed it. At that moment the wailing rather suddenly stopped, and a very ugly woman, who sat in the middle of the group, called out in her natural voice, "I shall not cry any more unless you give me something." She was the paid mourner who led the chant; there were two or three, indeed, who were pointed out to me, but she was the head. She held out her hand as she spoke very decidedly, and most of the people—

all, I believe—gave her a trifle ; and there were so many that she must have made a tolerable collection, even if each contributed little. I added a piastre or two, though not particularly approving her profession, as it seemed best not to oppose their customs unless absolutely wrong. But I whispered to Khaleel's mother, " If your son is, as I trust, gone to be with the Lord, it is not needful to cry and scream for him." " Do you think he is?" said she. I told her I hoped so, for that he had heard of Jesus, the Saviour, and I thought he believed in Him, and, if so, no doubt he was safe. The screaming had now recommenced, and some fresh arrivals demanded the attention of my poor old friend, who was obliged, by custom, to turn to each and go through a string of salutations ; so I took leave of her, promising to see her again in a few days.

Not long afterwards (I had seen her two or three times, and had always read to her at her own request) I was passing the door of the stable where she passed most of the day, as her husband's mill was there, turned by a horse ; and she sat near the door to receive the women who brought corn to grind. On seeing me she called out, and begged me to enter, saying she had had

such a curious dream, and wished to relate it. When I had taken my seat accordingly, she told me that yesterday she had visited a sheikh much esteemed among her people, in order to ask him if he could give her any certainty about her son, "whether he was in heaven," or as they always say, in *paradise*.

Now, Moslems hold that no true Moslem can fail *ultimately* of being there, but that only very holy ones, or only *some*, at all events, go there *at once* after death; some seem to be in a sort of purgatory, but their ideas are vague enough as to their intermediate condition, and the poor mother longed to think of her child as *happy*. The sheikh gave her vague and uncertain replies, and she returned very sorrowful and went to bed. She dreamed that she saw a place of amazing beauty, which she tried to describe to me, full of trees, fountains, and beautiful flowers; it was all bright and lovely, she could not find words to describe it, nor could I even comprehend fully those she used, but it was evident the vision had been a most delightful one. "Well," said she, "in this garden I saw Khaleel walking, and *you* were walking near him in it. Tell me, Sitt, do you think it was paradise, and is he there?"

She looked puzzled, and as if between pleasure and pain in her doubt ; I told her that whether it was a *mere* dream or a vision I could not know, but one thing I felt no doubt of, and that was that by the love and grace of Christ I should one day be among the glorified, and that if Khaleel had, as I hope, *believed*, he was there already, and we should meet some time ; “and now, mother,” I added, “it is your part to think of *your* soul. Why should not you be in paradise also ? Why should your son not meet you there ?” I then opened the book, and read her the last chapter of Revelation, and left her to meditate on it.

For some time the impression seemed strong—then the influence of bigoted neighbours induced the poor old woman actually to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, and I had the grief of finding her gone when I returned from a temporary absence. But she was vigorous, and survived the fatigues of that long and weary journey, came back and took her accustomed seat as if nothing had happened. My private opinion always was that she undertook the pilgrimage more from a craving to get away from home, where everything daily reminded her of

her lost child, than from any belief in its efficacy. It distracted her from her grief by the novelty and the fatigue, but I could not find that she had the feeling of its purifying effects, which Moslems in general imagine to exist. She was as willing to listen to the Scripture as before, and though giving no decided proof of change of heart, was by degrees less full of old legends and more indifferent to them, and always ready both to converse with me and to speak favourably of "the book," as she called it, to her neighbours.



FUNERAL SCENE.

CHAPTER VII.

A VILLAGE COURT-HOUSE.

IT was the middle of June,—burning June as it is in Egypt, that a little party started at six o'clock to visit a certain tract of land near a large village some ten miles from Cairo, which was to be purchased by one of the number. It was delightfully fresh for the first two hours, for the sun had not yet gained much power, and the road lay through an avenue of thick trees for some distance. Even when the carriage emerged on a piece of open country, and was dragged with some difficulty over the ruts of an unfrequented country road, which an English coachman would have at once declined attempting, it was still pleasant; the air heats much sooner in the city than in the country, and moreover we were now on higher ground. The village was of course built of mud brick, such being the usual material of Egyptian villages, and the houses looked poor enough

for the most part ; but the large shady trees at its entrance, and the groups of palms rising just behind it, gave a picturesque effect, which was added to not a little by the village market which was going on under a large sycamore fig-tree. The peasants, in their white or crimson turbans, and rough garments of brown wool, or in summer garb of white or blue cotton, were busily chatting together about sheep, corn, and vegetables ; heaps of black egg-plants, pumpkins, and gourds lying piled up beside the women who sold those lesser articles, and whose shrill voices made the scene as noisy as it was pretty to look at.

We left these busy groups behind us, and walked across the fields, under the guidance of a sturdy farmer, who was sheikh of the village, and whose praise of the healthfulness of the spot was certainly verified by his own appearance ; for such a large and stalwart frame I have seldom seen. His clear, brown skin, and perfect white teeth (though he must have been fifty, at least, from the size of his grandchildren), all bore favourable testimony to the good air of the locality. He was dressed in snow-white cotton robes, his head defended from the sun by a huge turban,

composed of many yards of muslin wound round a thick felt cap. With no small pride he pointed out to us the treasure of his piece of land, "a well of water." One must live awhile in the East to comprehend the full meaning of those expressions in Genesis about the wells, the servants of Isaac and the Philistines disputing for the possession, and the extreme value evidently attached to them. Most of the wells in Egypt are more or less brackish, and only fit for irrigation. A well of sweet water which is suitable both for that, and also for drinking, is therefore greatly prized, especially if at a distance from the river. There were two palm-trees, and half-a-dozen other trees, making a little bit of shade in the broad open plain; and the great wooden wheels went round, as the oxen turned them, with a creaking sound which is pleasant in this dry land, because it means "water" to accustomed ears; the water poured from pitcher to pitcher (a number of which are always fixed in the second wheel), making a cool splashing as it sparkled in the rays of the sun, and trickled down into the stone troughs which supplied the little channels for irrigation.

Here, after an examination of sundry acres of

corn, and sugar-cane, etc., we sat to rest on a carpet brought by some of the sheikh's servants and children, who also served us with little cups of black coffee. But our host assured us that the shade was too imperfect to be protection enough from the mid-day sun; and, after an hour's repose, we were glad to accept his proffered hospitality, and wend our way back to the village. It was not yet noon, but already the blaze of sun and the hot air felt like a furnace. The ground seemed to burn under one's feet, and the dust felt like hot ashes from an oven. It was not very often that I had ventured out of doors at that hour in summer; and, though by no means afraid of heat in moderation, I confess that this walk of about twenty minutes or half-an-hour seemed to me uncommonly long, and that, when we at last reached a large mud-brick tenement, and were ushered up a flight of rude steps outside the house into a tolerably cool room with latticed shutters, I felt almost too exhausted to speak.

A few minutes' rest and a glass of water soon refreshed us, however, and we then produced a basket of bread and cold fowls, which we begged the sheikh and his friends to share. They agreed,

insisting that we must, at a later hour, eat what they were preparing, with them; and, after some compliments on both sides, they joined the circle round a little low table, every one sitting on the carpet or mat.

The gentlemen then disposed themselves to rest and chat over cigars, and the sheikh produced his long cherry-stick pipe, while I thought it only polite to ask leave to visit the females of the family, though an hour's repose would have been more desirable, on selfish motives, certainly. I was led to a door opening into the sitting-room, and almost pushed in, and the door shut after me at once, lest any of the other sex might have a glimpse of the unveiled ladies within.

The hareem accommodation, I must own, was very inferior to that kept for the lords of creation—the rooms close, ill ventilated, with broken wooden lattices (no glass), and apparently very dirty in their usual condition, for a black slave-woman of extraordinary ugliness was at work sweeping away a large heap of rubbish and dust as I entered, with marks of evident haste, as if to make things tidy for a guest. There were no carpets, only old mats and dirty cushions; and on one of these sat the wife, a pretty, interesting-

looking young woman, with her eldest step-daughter, who was of the same age as herself. They saluted me civilly, and seemed pleased at the novelty of a European visitor. I asked the wife if a little child, which was rolled up asleep beside her, were her own, by way of saying something. She laughed at the question, and, taking it up, showed that it was black, saying it was the slave's child, and sorrowfully added that she had none of her own. However, she seemed not to feel any annoyance at the slave being an under wife, as is unhappily too general in hareems. Her step-daughters, of whom there were three—one married, and two nice girls of nine and ten—seemed very fond of her, and all came and sat beside us, together with a neighbour who entered to peep at the stranger. The hostess, after sitting a few minutes, suddenly rose, and began changing her dress of cotton print for a handsome vest and trousers of purple embroidered silk, going through her toilette very coolly in the same room with her guest. After adding a head-dress of gold coins, and a richly-chased necklace of antique-looking gold *fish*, she again seated herself by me on the cushions, with a very happy air of satisfaction.

The heat had now become so intense (for it was the hottest part of the day, and the room close) that, after half-an-hour's chat, I was induced to accept their hospitable offer to lie down a little and rest; but the swarms of flies and fleas made me soon glad to leave the couch. I then penetrated into the kitchen, where I found all the women assembled round a large pot that was boiling over a fire of sticks. While the negress stirred its contents, the others were grouped about looking very picturesque and very idle; so I proposed reading to them a story from my book. It was a very odd idea, evidently, to hear a stranger read, but no objection was made, and I read the simplest Gospel stories I could find, putting in the easiest and most homely explanations as I went along; and they appeared very much interested, especially the young wife, who sat by me, and listened with some intelligence. As usual, the difficulty was to get an uninterrupted hearing, as neighbours were always popping in and talking in loud voices, and trying to take off the attention of the listeners. There is almost always, in a large circle of Moslem women, some bigot who hates the sight of a Christian book, or any book that is not the Koran; and such point-

edly try to interrupt or even drown the reading by speaking loudly about some worldly business, or laughing and tittering. However, the young woman would not leave me till I had finished. I was then invited to return to the gentlemen of the party, and join them in a dinner or afternoon lunch, which our host had prepared. It consisted of boiled rice, with some curious-looking ragged bits of meat boiled, and some tinned iron saucers full of what appeared to a European eye to be "green pond," but was really a certain plant called *melukeeyeh*, stewed into a sort of slimy soup. It is much enjoyed by Egyptians, but I could not reconcile myself to its flavour, and with some difficulty swallowed a little, which I contrived to *hook* up with pieces of the flaps of bread, which supplied the place of fork or spoon. The peasants in the villages live simply enough, and even this humble fare seemed to be rather a feast to the friends whom the sheikh asked to partake of it with us.

. The business part of the transaction was not finished when we took leave, a couple of hours before sunset, though much time had been spent in discussion. Things are never got through quickly in the East, and the hours wasted on

smoking, and paying compliments, and staring at one another, seem to us rather provoking; but it is an inevitable evil, until they learn more of the value of time. I need not weary my reader, however, with an account of the endless visit paid in return by the sheikh and *his* friends to the purchasers and *their* friends, or detail how “scribes and lawyers” sat and quarrelled, and wrote, and re-wrote, and dined, and smoked, and quarrelled again, and made it up, and said, “Good, good, very well,” etc., etc.

Some time later, it was necessary for the same party to go again to the village, and to the court-house of the district, to get certain papers signed; and a description of this may be interesting, from the contrast it presents to such places in Europe. It was a still hotter day than on the former occasion—for now we had entered July, and were lucky if the thermometer was below a hundred in the shade—at any rate during the middle of the day. As the Government here requires many papers, and still more *fees*, for the most trifling affairs, a court-house is always crowded with persons on various errands of business. This one was the centre for a considerable number of villages and

small towns, yet its arrangements were far below those of a tolerably-managed ragged school in England. We were ushered up a narrow, dirty staircase, into a room—not large enough for its numerous occupants—the windows of which were broken, every third pane at least being gone, and a ragged curtain, tucked into the vacant spaces to keep out some of the glare of the scorching sun, instead of a blind. The wooden desks looked as if just thrown out of a school as too bad to use, and at these tumble-down things sat several scribes writing; while on a ragged divan, with soiled cushions, sat a dozen more, each with paper and “inkhorn” of brass in his girdle or in his hand; each head scribe chanting out his bill, or whatever it might be, in a singular but sonorous tone to his assistant, who copied it. Most of them were busied with figures and calculations of some sort, and the effect was very strange of hearing the quavering chant on the sum, as thus:—“Six hundred and fifty-nine and eighty-fi—ve, and thirty and sev—en and a ha—lf!” And so on, all the various chants and sums going on at once, each in his own key, but none very loud.

Numbers of sturdy peasants, with handsome

bronzed faces and finely-knit limbs, were standing in the centre of the room, and crowding the narrow passage ; and two half-naked lads, with long sticks, acted as doorkeepers.. Here we had to sit a considerable time on a hard bench, with nothing to do except to stare at everything, or passively be stared at by the occupants of the room.

Presently the judge or head-clerk—for I could not make out which it was—had a little diversion to his labours in the arrival of his dinner, a tray with vegetables, cheese, and water-melon being brought in by a lad ; and he, with two of the scribes next to him, very calmly partook of the refreshment in public, dipping their bits of bread in the dishes one after the other till satisfied. Then, wiping their hands, they resumed work ; and a peasant and two soldiers, who had been rather sullenly awaiting their leisure, were brought up and their papers examined.

At last our turn came ; and, after a great deal of needless questioning, as it seemed to us, as to the motives of purchase, and the private reasons for wanting such and such a piece of ground, etc., they finally condescended to say, “ You may go, and come for the papers another day.” Lawyers’

work is not celebrated for rapidity anywhere, but certainly Turkish law goes on wheels of *lead*.

The ride back to the station—for this time we had come by a cross road from the Alexandria railway—was a scorching one, but, fortunately, the neighbourhood is famed for its melons, which at the hottest season are in the best condition, and piles of this tempting fruit are arranged near the railway line for the travellers who may come to await the train.

Months passed since that day, and the last melons had long ago yielded their seed, and the ground on which they grew had been ploughed up, sown, and another crop (either corn or clover) was already in rapid progress, ere the dilatory judge had finished and signed the desired paper to complete the land purchase !

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR SCHOLARS.

OUR scholars ! What a difference between the circle of a few years ago and that now assembled ! What a strange set of wild little creatures the first troop of girls assembled with so much trouble were, and how hard it was to retain any of them long enough in attendance to gain any real good ! It is very up-hill work yet, but still, when looking back to a pile of old journals and notes, I see the progress (in spite of disappointment and failure from time to time) to be real and unmistakable.

One or two brief extracts from these notes, as contrasted with later ones, may be interesting to friends of education, and others can skip this chapter. Here is one extract, Nov., 1863 : " I had a little examination yesterday with Mr. Shakoor's assistance ; thirty girls in school, which we think a tolerable attendance. Little Fatmeh

(that is, Fatmeh Alee) was as usual in her place, gentle and good as ever, but seems just at the same column of spelling she began six months ago! She is far from quick; however, her Scripture answers are good; indeed several children are beginning to know something of the New Testament, and of the simplest events of the Old. Our scholars are chiefly of the poorest class, and the new-comers are so *very* dirty, so wild, and I might almost say barbarous in their habits, that it is difficult to get order and cleanliness enforced. The only teacher I can get reads tolerably, but she has no real interest in religion, and is mercenary. I have not time to work up my Arabic as I could wish, and have to spend faster than I earn, as I might say, so great is the necessity for teaching from one who has the whole matter at heart.

“I have been out hunting up old and new pupils. What a work it is, to be sure! Child after child found and brought to her mother, and mother after mother either refusing point-blank to send her to school, or promising to do so, and *not* doing it!

“The other day, I brought two dear little girls, who were playing at ‘dust-puddings’ in the lane, to their mother’s dwelling, which they

readily showed me. This is not always the case, for some are frightened at a foreign appearance, and run away, and even cry, if one speaks to them. These little creatures were so utterly ragged and dirty, that one might have supposed them in the lowest depth of poverty; instead of which their mother's dress and surroundings showed her to be tolerably well off. After some persuasion, she agreed, if they chose to come to school, to permit them; and they came at once. The youngest, Saida, who seemed to have taken a fancy to me, said, in a winning, childish voice, 'I wish to take your hand.' How gladly I took the little dusty hand, and conducted her and her sister to our schoolroom! But next day they did not return; my teacher sent after them, and learnt that a Moslem sewing-teacher had been jealous of losing them, and had been to the mother's house, cursed her, beat the children, and took them to her house. How, if they were of any value, she had allowed them to sit in the lane cooking dust-puddings, as I saw them doing, it is difficult to conceive! I suppose it was the feeling of the dog in the manger. I went to see the mother, and tried to expostulate, but in vain. She was so indifferent to their welfare, that a

quiet life was all she cared for ; and she only said, ‘ She beat them for going to you.’ ‘ Why did you allow it ? ’ said I. A shrug was the reply, accompanied by a peculiar sort of deprecatory sound, which the Egyptian women are very partial to. It is rather like a faint hiccough, but is varied according to circumstances, and is amazingly expressive sometimes, and very provoking !

“ In another lane an old woman held a controversy out of window with me on the advantages or *disadvantages* of education—I pleading its *usefulness*, and she its *uselessness*. The lane was perfectly quiet—at that hour especially—all the men and many women being absent at work, it seemed nearly deserted ; so the speaking from a window did not look so extraordinary as might appear. Had there been a stander-by with a photographic machine, a droll picture might have been made of the foreigner below endeavouring patiently to advocate her school, and the old dame nodding her perverse head from above, out of a picturesque lattice of ancient carved wood-work ; two or three ragged children, looking up from the dust-heap on which they were playing, being the audience ! ”

“ *December, 1863.*—Our attempts at anything like a Sunday class (either for male or female) are as yet rather like the flint-soup of the man and his wife in the story, who, having nothing to begin with except a couple of flints, set them in a pot of water on the fire! We have a room, a table, and a book all ready—only no listeners. However, as the woman, having boiled her flints for a while, at length felt stimulated to hunt everywhere for something else, and, by dint of perseverance and patience, accumulated herbs, bones, and crusts, till a real soup was the result; so we, by zeal and patience combined, may hope for success by and by—but we are at the flints still!”

So says the journal of 1863. At present, though circumstances often cause the Sunday classes and evening meetings to *vary* in numbers, they are an established fact; and sometimes I have quite a large circle of girls and women (mostly teachers' and scholars' relatives and near friends), while the men, who assemble on Sunday for a service in our hall, are sometimes few, sometimes many, but always enough to form a meeting. Nor do they only come on Sunday. A somewhat different adult meeting, with more of study, is held

every evening except Saturdays. Occasionally an interfering priest frightens away the scholars (who are generally Copts), and reduces the number considerably; but, after an interval, they frequently return. Certainly this is an improvement upon the table and the book—as much as the well-filled schoolrooms are upon the little ragged troops of former days. And poor Fatmeh!—the little girl alluded to as always in her place, good and gentle, though not quick—how little did I then think that she was destined to be the first-fruits! the first child led by the Spirit to know Jesus as her Saviour; my trusted and valued assistant among the youngest of the scholars; and finally called away from earth and its trials and difficulties, as is recorded in the brief sketch of her life!

The little weekly class of ragged boys may be considered as the seedling from which our boys'-school was afterwards developed. This is now, by God's grace, a good-sized tree, growing and thriving. Already a hundred and sixty boys are in daily attendance, and more constantly coming, including pupils from various nations and religions, but the mass being native Egyptians, both Copts and Moslems. Some come

from the neighbourhood, others from a distance, and some even from villages very far off; so that they are lodged in town for the purpose of attending school; several of these last are Moslem boys.

One day, a year ago, I was astonished at receiving a present of an enormous quantity of *eggs*, and, on inquiring whence they came, found that a peasant living near Benesuef, up the Nile, had a son attending the school; and, wishing to show his respect to the family, had taken the opportunity of some friend coming down the river to send this great basket-full of eggs from his village!

A few of the boys of a higher class arrive daily on donkeys, their homes being at the other end of town; but the greater proportion of the scholars are poor children who have no such luxuries. The utmost equality prevails, no difference of treatment being allowed; and the cleanly appearance of all, however poor, has often elicited remarks from visitors as no small feat to have achieved in a country where children are usually so exceedingly dirty, both in dress and face, save on peculiar festive occasions.

The education given these boys is of a high

order. Mr. Shakoor was of opinion that it was well worth the labour and expense, if by this means we could bring a greater number of boys under Gospel influence. Mere reading and writing would never bring scholars, for they have plenty of such elementary schools, where their own books are taught; but languages, accounts, geography, history, and even the elements of geometry, being taught here, many of them are sent for these advantages, and thus have the opportunity of learning also the Word of God, which is made the *foremost* of all studies.*

The girls'-school did not increase in numbers quite so rapidly. Early marriages, and the fact—equally true in all countries—that girls in the middle and lower classes are more useful at home than boys, added to the supreme indifference of the greater number of Moslem Egyptians to female education, are great hindrances. We have more than a hundred on our list, but seldom more than from seventy-five to eighty-five present together. But when the new schools are built,

* There are advanced schools under the Government at present, where good secular instruction is given; but our motives being higher, there is an earnestness and love in the teaching which no *merely* paid teachers can emulate.

we expect more pupils ; and meantime many of those now reading fluently in the Testament came almost as babies, and are therefore not only improved in knowledge and intelligence, but in manners and habits.

As to spiritual advancement, that, as every thoughtful Christian knows, must come from God alone, but we endeavour to teach this fact as early as possible, and also to let our scholars see that we desire them to be the children of God more than anything else. Nor is the teaching of those things that concern salvation confined strictly to the time spent in reading Scripture. A few questions, or a remark in the course of a secular lesson, often shows them what is the most important of all matters in our minds. Nothing positively controversial is taught ; that is to say, no contemptuous expressions about the religion of any of the children are allowed ; and the plainest truths of the gospel specially set forward : but occasionally something comes into the lesson which shows, to an intelligent learner, the vanity and absurdity of the superstitions around them. For example, one day while at their geography, the head class of girls were answering questions as to the names of chief

cities, etc., and something to fix the place in the mind was told them about most of the towns named. "What are the chief cities of Arabia?" "Mecca and Medina," replied two of the scholars promptly. "You remember that many people go from here every year to Mecca?" I said. "Yes; to see the stone," said a Mohammedan girl. "Yes, that is true; they go to pay respect to a great stone which they think holy," I replied. "It is all black," observed a Christian child, with a smile. "Can the stone do any good to them?" "No, certainly," she answered. "Can a stone, whether at Mecca or anywhere else, save our souls?" "No, no," answered several voices. "Who can save us?" "Jesus Christ," they *all* answered.

Of course we have had many disappointments. This is the case under the most favourable circumstances, even in England; how much more here? Some (though but few) have been removed because of the bigotry of the parents. Among these were a pair of young cousins, whom I had taken much interest in, and had succeeded in bringing back three or four times, their mothers yielding to their entreaty, for they liked school; but at last it came to a failure.

The older of the mothers said, "If you will let her sew while the rest read, she may go, but as to reading it is of no use to girls, and if they do read it ought to be good books, and yours are not good."

"How do you know, as you cannot read, and have never even seen them," said I. "Oh, our book is good, and no other," replied the woman, nodding her head with a self-complacent air. "It is as you like," said I, "we cannot change our rules for your girl, but I am sorry for her sake." "Perhaps I will send her next week," said the mother rather patronizingly. "All the better for her if you do," and I took leave, but the poor child followed me up the lane, and said, with tears in her eyes, "It's no use; she won't let me come—she doesn't mean it;" and so it seemed by the event, for Zeynab and her cousin came not. *Zeynab* is one of the favourite names here, and is, perhaps, the commonest of all—derived from a female saint, whose mosque is often visited and much revered by the common people. Occasionally among the Zeynabs, Hosas, and Ayushas, which are so frequent among Moslems, we meet with curious and less common appellations: one little girl answers to

the name of "Zimzim," and I found, on inquiry, that this odd-sounding name belonged to a fountain on the road to Mecca, and greatly venerated. Water of *Zimzin* is alluded to in the Arabian Nights, as being brought from Arabia to Cairo for great ladies, who used it as a sort of charm, or as holy water is used among ignorant and superstitious Christians.

Another child, whose father was talking to me about sending her as soon as she should be a little older, answered to the name of "Fuzz," which was so absurdly suitable to the appearance of her rough little head that I was greatly diverted. "Sitt ul Banat" (lady of the daughters, or girls), is a not very rare appellation, given by some proud young mother, who fancies her little one superior to every baby that ever was seen! I know one unlucky owner of this name who is squint-eyed and partially idiotic, but such failures will occur now and then everywhere. One who bears the curious title of "Um el Kheyr," or mother of goodness, may, perhaps, be equally disappointing. The more common names are prettier than these odd ones to the ears—at least to most strangers' ears—such as Zareefa, Zobeide, Aneeseh, Amena, and

others. Some, as Noor (light), and Wurdeh (rose), and Zahra (flower), are common to both Moslem and Christian Egyptians ; but the Copts have some peculiar to themselves, chiefly those belonging to saints either of the Greek or Coptic Church. With the exception of Hannah (a favourite among all Eastern Christians) and Mariam or Mary—used by Mohammedans occasionally, and by Copts, of course, frequently, as by all Christians—they have very few Scripture names in use among girls. Most of the Mohammedan *boys'* names have something to do with their religion—Moses, Abraham, Ishmael, etc., are common naturally, as well as Mohammed, but many are named from certain titles and attributes of their Prophet. “Servant of the Prophet” is not a very uncommon name ; and I once knew a nice little boy who was called “Servant of the *Night*.” I do not know if it had any reference to some holy night, such as their Prophet’s birthnight, or what other meaning might be attached to it, but it had a sorrowful signification to my mind. The poor little fellow came to me to bring a young sister to school in the very early days, when the work was just begun, and, as it was an uncommon event to

have a boy bring a girl to school, I recollected the name, and how I vainly tried to trace them both afterwards, the girl disappearing one day after some months' steady attendance, and the little donkey boy (for such was the Servant of Night) never turning up. Surely these poor children, led far away from the true light, are all servants of the night in one sense! We must both work and pray that our God may lead them to the knowledge of that Light that came into the world, and that our scholars may be able one day to say, "we are not the children of darkness but children of the day," and that both Copt and Moslem may join us in eternal gratitude to Him who knows His own sheep, and calleth them all by their names of whatever nation or country.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST FRUITS GATHERED.

It is now more than seven years ago since the first attempt at a girls' school among the poor children, chiefly of the Moslems, was begun in Bab-el-Bahar. Instead of the troops of little veiled maidens of various stations, from the respectable tradesman's daughter to the child of a poor rag-seller, who come daily up the stair of the school-house to the upper rooms, where they learn under a work-mistress and several pupil-teachers (while treble the number of boys are studying below), the whole school *then* consisted of nine or ten little girls; and when after a month or so the flock was increased to fifteen, I well recollect the hope and joy with which I was inspired. My worthy helper, the Syrian matron (who never would have left a post she loved, but for her eyes, which unhappily could not stand the Egyptian climate), heard the young scholars as

they stood at her knee, and usually took only one or at most two at once, repeating letter by letter and word by word ; while I, more experienced in teaching, but with a very scanty acquaintance with the language, was meantime endeavouring to get order and obedience among the disorderly wild crew, or instructing beginners in their alphabets, or making them repeat their first text, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It seemed quite an achievement when we at length had a dozen girls who could say, and in some degree *understand* this and the next which I taught them—"Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life," etc.

Among the first of our scholars in those early days, was a rather delicate-looking little girl about eight years of age, who showed a quiet docile disposition, not very common among them, and who, though neither pretty nor clever, always interested me from her amiable temper and steady attendance. It was a long time before she learned to read ; many who came a year later learned to master the difficult characters and intricate spelling of that most difficult language (for so it is even for natives) far sooner than Fatmeh, but she *liked* to come. There was no

need of driving or coaxing with her, unless detained by real sickness; and every year this was the case, for her health was never good. Her white veil and scarlet *tob* (as they call the loose frock worn by children and sometimes by women), were constantly to be seen fluttering in the wind, as she went in or out of the school-house. Her eyes were not strong, and every summer had an attack of the country malady; but no sooner were they recovered than she hastened back to her class. As soon as she was old enough I placed her as monitress over a set of small children, chiefly from her own quarter, and all Mohammedans, with, I think, only two exceptions. They were poor, and very wild and dirty in habits, but by degrees were brought into order, and Fatmeh's steadiness made her a most valuable assistant. As the school increased, she was given, like the other teachers, a small monthly sum, which probably bought her clothes. The father, a bigoted man, would not have left her so long with us but for some such worldly advantage, but as she was quiet and timid, and never spoke in his presence except on household affairs, he never interfered with her, and the mother was proud of hearing the good

and modest conduct of her child spoken of by the neighbours, and was also affectionately disposed to me, as I had often visited her family in sickness, and had been of use to them by a blessing on the remedies in one or two rather severe cases. Fatmeh was threatened with blindness more than two years ago, the ophthalmia having fallen on both eyes, and for weeks she was forced to be absent from school. The physician she went to afforded some relief by blisters, which he desired to be put behind the ears, but he told me privately that one eye was hopeless, and he had but little hope for the other. I visited the poor girl to dress the blisters for her, and the mother told me she was distracted with grief, and that in the night she could hear her between her sobs saying incessantly, "O Lord, help me ! O Lord, spare my eyes ; *anything* but my eyes, O Lord !" I had then a long talk with her, and tried to show her that the Lord knew best what was for our good, but that we might *ask* in full faith that, *if* it were fit for us, God would grant our wish. I promised to pray specially for her eyes, and did so for several days, and at the same time gave her a remedy lately recommended to me by an English doctor who had kindly written me some

hints about eyes, and asked a blessing upon it. By God's grace it answered, and the eyes *both* recovered ; one entirely, and the other partially, for though with a small spot on the iris, it was yet serviceable and did not pain her. She returned after an absence of nearly three months, and took her class again as before. We had now commenced a Sunday-class for our female teachers and some of their friends, and though Fatmeh only came occasionally to this, as her family frequently wanted her, and evidently grudged her giving even one hour on a day for which no *pay* was taken, she came when she could, and her answers in Scripture showed that the Gospel had taken real hold of her heart. So did her teaching of the little children ; I often listened to her with her class, and sometimes questioned them separately, and always found that she taught them simply that Jesus was the only Saviour, and that by his death alone we can be forgiven our sins. About a year ago Mr. Shakoore began to give a daily Scripture lesson to the pupil-teachers, together with two or three of the most advanced scholars, and though at first he complained a little of Fatmeh's reading being below the others, yet as her frequent suffering

with the eyes had caused her backwardness, he knew it was not idleness, and she gradually improved: of her own accord she bought a Bible and took it home with her. One day when visiting her family I had been asking the father to let his son, a bright boy some years younger than Fatmeh, attend the boys' school, and he as usual replied, "By and by, when Ahmed has learned the Koran well, but not yet." When the father was not present I regretted this to the mother, saying, it was a pity, for that the Gospel was God's own word, and every one was the better for knowing it; the boy looked up smiling, and said, "Oh, but I read in Fatmeh's book now, and read many things from it!" It is the custom in Moslem families, and indeed in Copts also, to marry the girls at a ridiculously early age, as was observed in the chapter on marriages. Fatmeh was now at least fourteen or fifteen, yet no word of betrothal was heard. I was thankful, of course, as every month we can keep the girls is a gain for them; but the reason was evident, no one liked a girl of feeble health for a wife, and though her eyes were better than for years previous, only having occasional slight attacks, which soon yielded to

remedies, her general health was worse, and, without any definite or apparent malady, it was clear that she was not likely to live to grow up, and that a gradual waste or decline was stealing on her. Paler and thinner, and more hollow-cheeked, she grew week by week, but rarely was absent from her place, and, though easily fatigued, seemed not to suffer much pain. At last she had been away for two or three days, and then I was told she was very ill, and went to see her, leaving some remedies which relieved for the time, but I saw it was probable she would not rally for long, as appetite and strength had utterly failed. I came from that time every day to sit with and read to her, and always found her glad to listen. She was too feeble to speak much, but her replies were very satisfactory. Once only I saw her for a few minutes alone. I profited by the rare chance to be more decided in my questions than before ; as nearly as possible this was our conversation (after I had asked whether she knew herself to be near death, and if she was ready) : “ Yes, I am not afraid to die,” she said. “ Why do you think God has forgiven your sins ? ” “ For Jesus’ sake, who died on the cross for us.” “ Then you know you are a sinner yourself ? ” “ Yes.” “ Where do you think

your soul will go if you die now?" "To Jesus."
"Well, dear Fatmeh, it may be that God will take you away from earth soon, because He perhaps thinks you too weak to bear the trials and difficulties of living among those who don't believe in Jesus Christ—if so, are you willing to die?"
"Better so," she said very emphatically. "You will have round you those who have no faith in Christ's death, and who will tell you many things that are not true; but you know the Gospel, you know better than those words." "They are vain words; all those are vain and worthless!" she said, with a smile of meaning on her face.
"Then you can trust in your Saviour alone, Fatmeh?" "Yes." "Do you know the meaning of baptism?" "John baptized to repentance," she replied.

"Yes; but after John's time, after Christ's death, those who believe are baptized, as a sign that they belong to Christ; but He will accept you without the sign because He knows your case." We may surely trust that the Lord, who knew all the difficulties, did not the less receive the poor sheep whom He had sought in the wilderness.

In many of my subsequent visits, I had some

little trouble with the friends, who came more and more frequently to see her as the end approached, sitting six or eight together round her bed, which was only a quilt laid upon a mat on the floor. These women, by their gossiping talk, often interrupted my reading, and their dirty babies crawled over the invalid's feet, or cried till I could not make my voice heard; but I could not induce the mother, though I ventured some whispered hints, to ask them to stay at a little distance, or sit in the other room; for Fatmeh's parents were above the very poor, and had two rooms upstairs, besides a sort of kitchen below. No one here dares to give visitors to the sick the least hint that they are too many or too noisy for a sufferer, and in some cases I have reason to think recovery has been *prevented* by this cause alone. Poor Fatmeh, however, could never have recovered; only it was trying that she could get no quiet in her last hours; and once or twice a bigoted neighbour told me not to trouble her with reading. "She can't hear now, and is too sick to listen to your book." "Leave it alone!" added another, rudely. I answered mildly, and patting her on the shoulder, as one does here when wishing to soothe any one, "Don't mind,

good friend; I know my little girl here very well, and she likes to hear these good words." I appealed to the poor child, though she really had great difficulty in speaking. The woman said, "She doesn't want it; she says so." I was sure she misinterpreted the feeble whisper purposely, and repeated my question, when Fatmeh, with an effort, and looking troubled, replied, "I said it is *good*." Then I read some verses, and coming quite close, prayed for her, so that only she and the sister who supported her could hear. She seemed to join, and said again, "Yes." One day, when suffering much, she said to me, "When will He take me? I *want* to go;" looking at me piteously, and as if she thought I must know. I told her God's time was best, but I believed it would be very soon, and we would pray for Him to take the severe pain away, which I did; the sisters only being present, I could speak more freely, and prayed earnestly that her faith and peace might increase, and that Jesus would soon call her to dwell with Him in joy, where sorrow and pain could not come. The prayer was granted, for she had no sharp pain from that day, and shortly after indeed the end came. I went on Sunday morning, and

found her apparently insensible, and surrounded by weeping relatives and neighbours. The sisters, however, made me room, and I knelt by the dying girl, and repeated in a low but distinct voice, “ ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I want nothing.’ Jesus said, ‘I am the good shepherd; my sheep hear my voice.’ You are going to Him, my daughter; fear not!” She opened her half-closed eyes, and looked as if already beginning to see the veil lifted—that rapt, far-off look, which watching Christians have often seen in a dying believer. I turned to the mother, and said, “Your child is going to be happy; it is sad for you to part from her, but she will be better off with God.” “Ah, she was always good; never cursed or used bad words like others; she was good from a child,” sobbed the poor woman. “She knows that she is a sinner, as we all are,” I said; “but God has forgiven her sins for the sake of Christ, who died to take our punishment.” I said this for the bystanders’ sake; then, looking at the fast fading form, I said, “Fatmeh can say as David did—‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.’” To their surprise, the girl opened her eyes wide, and said to the sister who was

wetting her lips with a finger dipped in water, "The *kulleh*," meaning the water vessel. With some difficulty they poured a few drops down her throat, and some of the women said, "She may now last some hours." There did seem a slight rally indeed, and as the crowd of women in the small room made it difficult to stay without fainting (the weather being very hot), I thought I would go, and return after church was over. I again repeated the verse of the 23rd Psalm, and added, as I stood up to go, "The Lord is with you, my daughter, now, and for ever and ever!" She turned her eyes towards me, and looked after me as I slowly retreated, with a beautifully calm, grave expression. I had scarcely reached home, when her little sister came running upstairs after me, sobbing out, "She is gone; she is dead!" It seemed I had but just left the room when she suddenly expired: the words of peace were the last my poor girl heard in this world.

I went in the afternoon to see the poor mother, and found the place crammed to suffocation; professional wailers being joined by all the female part of the neighbourhood, and all were screaming, sobbing, and even howling—the

younger sister and mother nearly in convulsions indeed. The corpse was covered with a red shawl, and jewels, doubtless hired ones, laid on the veiled face ; the chief wailer sat at her feet, twisting a handkerchief, and shrieking in loud tones. A similar scene that took place years ago came forcibly into my mind, and I seemed to hear the Redeemer's voice, whispering, "Why make ye this ado and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

Is it not so, and is not this a blessed first-fruits brought to the Lord of the harvest ?



SCHOOL-GIRLS EMBROIDERING.

CHAPTER X.

THE MARRIED PUPIL.

I HAD ascended a broken stair, and entered by a door without a handle. A sick woman lay in a corner of a small room, as comfortless as dirt and disorder could make it, and with marks, not of actual want, indeed, but of poverty on the little furniture it contained. She was the object of my visit, being the mother of one of my scholars. The family was poor; in England, indeed, the small wages of the father, amounting to about sixteen shillings a month, or little more, would have been downright misery; but the amount of clothing and fuel required is, of course, very much less in a warm climate, and the house, such as it was, belonged to him. Situated in a narrow, close street, with a ruined wall opposite, in whose rubbish-heaps the city dogs found quarters, and surrounded by wretched habitations all falling to decay like itself, it was a miserable abode for

an invalid. Not a breath of air seemed to penetrate, and the heat was overpowering. The poor sufferer was afflicted with a complication of maladies, and, as she lay on her ragged quilt, rolled up in dark blue ragged veils and mantles, her grizzled hair escaping from under a black kerchief, she looked dismally uncomfortable! But there was light in the dwelling—light which is sometimes wanting in homes of a far more pleasing aspect—and this light came entirely from the young daughter of the invalid woman, who had been for some time a pupil at my school.

After the usual inquiries, and suggestions of some alleviations of her state, I offered to read to the woman from the Gospel. As she was a Copt, I expected acquiescence; for they, being nominal Christians, have at least an outward respect for the Scriptures; and though, when in health, too often unwilling to listen, being as full of worldly cares as others, yet when incapable of work I did not expect a *refusal* to listen. But not only did she gladly accept my offer, but added—

“Martha,” pointing to her daughter, “reads every day in the Gospel to me.”

“I am very glad of that, my child,” I said.

“You shall read a chapter now. I should like to hear you better than to read it myself.”

I selected a chapter, and she read it accordingly. She was one of the best readers at the school, being remarkable for diligence; and she read in a clear, intelligible way, and not in the mumbling voice and careless manner too common with children. Every now and then she paused to give to her poor ignorant mother the necessary explanations (I purposely forbore in order to hear how she would do it). There was no conceit or assumption of superiority, but, “You know, mother, that was what our Lord said;” “Jesus meant so and so, mother;” sometimes turning to me for a confirmation. It was a touching sight—the untaught mother, long a Christian only in name, learning of her child to know the Gospel, and receiving it apparently with a child-like and simple heart!

I had for some time had hopes of this dear girl, that she had really been born again, but was fearful of building on expressions, etc., knowing how easily young persons are led to say more than they feel. Her general conduct, however, was quite as hopeful as her language, and here was a genuine proof that she loved the Word

of God, and was trying to bring her ignorant mother to the truth !

A little while after this visit, Martha was made a pupil teacher. She had the care of a younger class for a certain part of the day, continuing her own studies the rest of the time—this being the plan I find answers best for preparing teachers. On account of the early marriages, it is necessary to instal the girls as teachers as soon as they are in any degree capable, so as to have a chance of at least a *few* years of work after all our trouble with them ; but it is often disappointment, for the parents have rarely sense to delay a marriage if a tolerable one can be found, however young the girl.

Martha's mother did not get better. They sent her to some relations in the country, in the hope that change of air (the Egyptian's favourite and *best* remedy for long illness) might be of use ; but after some months she returned wholly blind, and more feeble than ever, and did not survive her return more than two months ; and trouble and sickness in the house prevented my going to see her, as she lived a good way off, so I never saw her again. Though a feeble and

stunted ear, she was yet an ear of corn to be gathered into the heavenly storehouse. The labours of her young daughter had been blessed, as appeared from the account she gave me of her mother's end.

"Her peace of heart never left her," she said. "I used to read the Gospel constantly to her, and she loved to hear it." She added, in reply to some questions, that she had placed all her trust in Jesus Christ, and not the least confidence in priest, or saint, or Virgin. "It was all Christ," she said. "We were all with her when she died, and she was quite peaceful, and glad to go to be with the Lord."

Any who have laboured to spread the blessed knowledge of salvation through the Saviour, will appreciate the joy and thankfulness with which I heard this account.

The young teacher was still a regular attendant at school, as before her mother's death, and attended the Sunday class as often as possible; but a worldly sister-in-law, who had now the management of the family, contrived to hinder her getting out on Sundays when she could, because, as no wages were gained by coming, she doubtless thought it waste of time. Besides this, among

the Copts, Sunday is specially devoted to visiting, and is thus (in their opinion) a valuable occasion of showing the young girls off in their best clothes among female relatives and friends, and thus getting proposals of marriage from their describing them and talking of them to their sons, brothers, and nephews. Still, when she could, Martha came, and seemed to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

On leaving home for a short visit to Europe, I told her we hoped to promote her and raise her wages on my return; but, alas! before that time came, her father insisted on taking her away to be married! He was poor, and got a good offer, and nothing would induce him to delay, lest he might lose the fortunate chance, though the girl begged hard to wait till the ladies were at home, that they might be at her bridal. She was fifteen, but far from having the precocious appearance attributed to Eastern girls, and found in *some*. She looked considerably *less* than her age, being short, with a round and rather child-like face. Her whole air, figure, and manner were those of a girl of twelve or thirteen only; but in knowledge and good sense she was anything but childish. The bridegroom, who

was of Abyssinian race, was at least twice her age—apparently more; however, he certainly showed great discretion in his choice, and unworldliness also; for his bride, though pleasing and intelligent, was by no means handsome, and her father could give not only no dowry, but hardly any clothes as an outfit, being so poor. There was reason to believe that her Christianity was the attraction, for he had long attended the evening meetings of the missionaries, and often sat and conversed with them in the book-depôt near the school; and Martha's love for the Scripture, and proficiency in reading, were advantages in his eyes, and he wisely thought she was more likely to make a good wife than many pretty girls decked in jewels, of whom he might have had his choice—for he was in a good employment.

Of course, I inquired for my young scholar on my return, but could not find her residence. The husband came to pay his respects, and said she was most eager to see "her lady," but he would not let her come till her married woman's dress was complete, as she had only the out-door equipment that she had worn at school.

"It is true," he said, "that Martha declares

this does not signify. She says, 'The lady is as a mother to me. What difference is it to her how I am dressed ?' "

But, on account of the neighbours' tongues, he was resolute. He feared they would look down on the poor portionless little bride if she came out in her maiden mantle of white cotton, instead of the proper matron's silk. This is a very expensive affair, as it consists of a tob, or dress without sleeves, of some brilliant-coloured silk, made very full, and fastened at the waist by a sash; and over this an immense shroud of black silk, with a covering for the face attached to a fillet on the head. These latter are both laid aside in the house, but the tob is worn while visiting. The whole suit must cost a good deal; yet all Copts wear it, except the very poorest and the young girls, though even they frequently assume it, if they can persuade their fathers to purchase the materials. However, it is expected to last for many years. The husband of our bride ought to have provided her at once, but was in no hurry to do so, and actually purchased jewels for her while letting her be kept prisoner at the house for want of walking attire! Perhaps he was glad of this excuse, for the old Coptic

custom is to make a bride a prisoner, not even allowing her to visit her own relatives for a year, or six months at the least. Being of professedly liberal views, he would not allow that he desired to shut up his little wife from this reason; but I suspected that he was afraid of offending relations, or had not courage to break through the silly habit. The poor young creature was of an affectionate nature, and felt pained at not seeing me; so she at last persuaded her husband to ask me as a great favour to go and see her, without waiting for her to come and pay her respects first. Of course I willingly agreed, especially as he said she fretted and was quite unhappy at the idea of not seeing me after an absence of three months! So I walked with the husband to her abode, which was some little distance from the school-house. During the walk he apologized much for giving me this trouble, and said he meant Martha by and by to come every Sunday to join the Gospel class, making the excuse before alluded to about the dress; but how far it was all true time alone can show. Those who have been brought up to think it no sin to say what they do not really mean, are slow in learning "all sincerity," such as the

Gospel teaches, even when believers, and I did not know enough of this person to be certain that he belonged truly to Christ, though his interest in religion was unmistakable.

It was hot enough to make the walk fatiguing, and I was very glad when at last we stopped, and I was ushered up a flight of well-swept stone steps, while my guide called loudly—

“Martha, make haste and come down. Your lady is come. Never mind changing your dress.”

The poor little bride had no wish to delay, indeed, and hurried down in her working attire, and without waiting for any ceremony (which seemed a little to astonish her husband), sprang on my neck, and clung like a child to her old friend, breathless with the vehemence of her kisses and exclamations of welcome and pleasure.

“I did so want to see you ! I wanted not to be married till you and Sitt F—— had come home,” she cried, “only they would not wait, as I wished. I am so glad at last to see you again ! ”

As she spoke, the young matron conducted her guest to her best room—a very different one from her poor mother’s wretched home—a large, plainly-furnished, but comfortable apartment, in

Eastern style, and everything as clean and neat as could be ; and here, with her little bare feet tucked up on the sofa, she poured out her stream of inquiries after everybody at the Mission-house, saying it had seemed so long to her not to have seen her old friends.

The husband returned to us presently, carrying the coffee himself ; and actually, after serving me, served his little wife, of whom he seemed fond and proud. The difference of age is felt in such cases even more than in countries where the two sexes are in the habit of meeting freely, and the school-girl and the grave-looking clerk could scarcely have at first very much in common, and looked almost absurdly unlike in everything ; but it is to be hoped that there will be a strong and growing tie in the love of the Word of God which both profess to feel, and, as I hope, seriously. The man spoke of this very nicely, and said he hoped Martha would always love to read the Bible as she now did. "Indeed, she reads every day," he said.

As the father was very poor, and I had no reason to suppose he sought for anything but worldly advantage in seeking a match for his child, I felt this was most truly a blessing sent

from the Lord, that the young and inexperienced believer should be united to one who was likely to help instead of hindering her. She has been to visit the Mission-house since, and appears very affectionate, and anxious (as far as the narrow-minded customs of her people allow) to see all she can of her teachers and friends.

She made the bridal call in a full matron's dress. The black *shroud-like* "habarah," when laid aside, permitted a rich green silk "tob" to be visible within, and plenty of ornaments; but, though pleased with her finery in a girl-like, natural way, the bride did not seem full of it, as often is the case, to the exclusion of other thoughts, and was delighted to tell how her husband read the Bible with her on his return from business every evening, and gladly joined another young visitor in reading a chapter and talking over it with me.

We shall watch anxiously over this dear young pupil, and earnestly hope she may be kept in the love of her Saviour and diligent serving of Him; and that the little candle lighted at the torch of our school (as one may say) will become a light in this dark place!

CHAPTER XI.

THE ISOLATED COPTS.

THE Moslem Egyptians are (as most know who are conversant with the history of the country) a mixed race, composed of the Arab conquerors and settlers, mingled with the natives of the soil, who had been compelled to conform to their faith in the great Saracenic invasion ; and though the conquered people lost their own language—the Arabic being now the sole spoken tongue among them—yet the Egyptian element must have been considerable, as is shown by the similarity of features and complexion between them and the Copts. Now some persons have an idea that the Coptic portion of the people—who are the undoubted remnant of the Egyptian church—are so different in everything from their neighbours of the Moslem faith, as to be distinct in outward appearance, and to speak their own old language. But in fact, the only important differences are such

as belong to their religion ; in habits, dress, and looks they are (especially those of the lower orders) very much alike. When the Saracenic invasion took place, Christianity in Egypt was already at a low ebb, and the want of literature doubtless combined with the tyranny of their conquerors, to sink them still lower, and to cause the Coptic language to become a dead one, used, indeed, in their churches, but quite unintelligible except to a few learned men.

For a long period they were an oppressed remnant, and had many restrictions imposed ; now they enjoy full liberty, and rank among them some of the wealthiest citizens of the country. But though no longer frightened into turning Mohammedans by persecution, it is still by no means rare for isolated persons among them to join the predominant religion for the sake of worldly advantages. In the villages which are so thickly scattered along the banks of the Nile, there are many (especially those within thirty or forty miles of Cairo) inhabited by Mohammedans ; but among these it is not unfrequent to find one or two Copt families, and it appears that, by constant intercourse of the

children, and forming early friendships, etc., some are induced to change their faith.

There are, doubtless, cases enough which no one hears of, but perversions from Copts are by no means very uncommon, to say nothing of nominal Christians of other countries, who get swallowed up, as it were, in the tide.

I observed a peasant woman one day in a village some forty miles from Cairo, whose features were not at all of the Egyptian style. "Ah," said one of the bystanders, whom I asked to what nation she belonged, "she is an Armenian; her father had a place as agent, and died when she was quite young. She had no mother, and a Mohammedan adopted her; she is one of *us*, and her name is Fatmeh."

This was only one case out of many; unhappily there are even Englishwomen, who having been foolish enough to marry Mohammedans, suffer all their children to be brought up in that faith, if they do not actually conform to it themselves. For such there is not, of course, the shadow of an excuse; but the poorer Copts, when isolated, as I observed, are sometimes really under great temptations; they have never been taught the true and spiritual part of

Christianity ; a corrupted letter *without* the spirit was in general all that they knew, and when deprived, by distance from their own places of worship, of the ceremonies of their church, and dependent for society and neighbourly offices only upon Moslems, it is hardly to be wondered at that some give up the little they have—the shell of Christianity.

When on the Nile in our winter trip, our party has always visited Moslem villages more than any others, because these lay more within our reach (being nearer the city), and for various other reasons also. We made a point, however, of taking pains to find out any stray family of Copts who might chance to be dwelling among them, and in several instances have had the comfort of leaving copies of the Scriptures in such isolated homes, and of arousing something of life and interest in them.

One instance of peculiar interest I noted down. We had been passing a few days in a country village near Gezeh, and, according to custom, had endeavoured to persuade some of the inhabitants, who were Arabs of Bedouin race (though partially settled), to listen to some

Scripture reading, and several came to hear, and expressed considerable interest. It is a missionary's duty to sow beside all waters, and to lose *no* opportunity, even if his chance of doing good be but small, and Mr. Shakoor and his brother, fully impressed with this feeling of responsibility, were urgent in bringing forward the truths of God's Word, and thankful for even a *hearing*; but long experience had taught them the great difficulty of making a lasting impression on Egyptians. Those *few* that have a love of truth, or, rather, whose hearts are touched by grace to see and know that "Thy word *is* truth," have much to contend with and much to risk: the sower of the seed, therefore, has need of much patience; and though he need not actually be *expecting* and looking for disappointment, as that would paralyse his efforts for good, he must yet be prepared for it, and not surprised.

The Bedouins of this place were willing to listen, and even to discuss, and this was good as far as it went. One of them was a sheikh, distinguished from his ragged companions by a handsome tarboush (*i.e.*, a felt cap) of bright red (for Bedouins do not often wear a turban, but

throw a silk or woollen shawl over the tarboush when in sun or wind), and also by a long white mantle wrapped round and flung over his shoulder, and which was new and clean, thereby marking the gentleman in his line of life. This man came to see us on the afternoon following the day of our arrival, and with him were three men, evidently peasants of the country, and not desert Arabs, from their dress and appearance. These he introduced as friends of his—Copts from the next village. “I have brought them,” said he, “to hear your book.” The men then explained that they were the only Coptic families residing in that village, and that yesterday the sheikh had mentioned that he had been listening to some strangers, who read from a book belonging to the Christians. “You,” he said, “know nothing of it though you call yourselves Christians.” The curious part of the history is that this very man had been trying to persuade the poorest of these Coptic peasants to turn Mohammedan, and had promised him a suit of clothes (and other advantages in prospect, I believe, but the clothes were to be given at once if he would conform). There is, of course, some honour always attached to the bringing

over a Christian to their faith among Moslems ; yet this sheikh was the person to tell them of the book ! Whether he spoke in a moment of partial conviction that the book was true, or what motive he had in mentioning it, I cannot tell, but the fact is that he came with the three Copts on Saturday afternoon, and sat down with them to listen while Mr. Shakoor opened the Bible and read to them both from the New and Old Testament. He read to all alike, and told them God's word was for *all* men. One of the Copts asked many questions, and the others, though more silent, appeared much interested. All the three professed themselves ashamed of their utter ignorance of the book, which they knew was God's word, but pleaded the want of books, or schools, or any means of learning in their isolated situation, as some excuse. More than two hours were spent in reading and explaining, and when they separated, which was only just before sunset, Mr. Shakoor asked if any of them would come next day, which was Sunday, and join in our prayer and reading of Scripture. The whole party thanked him for the offer, but the Mohammedans did not come ; they are very loth to be seen at a Christian prayer, though

reading they are often willing to listen to. The Copts, however, promised to come, and two of them did so ; the third had been prevented, they said, by business : for the members of the Copt Church pay little regard to Sunday, when any good is to be gained by business. The service we held in our humble desert abode was, of course, arranged so as to suit the two strangers, and the discourse was a simple and clear preaching of the Gospel, such as, doubtless, they had never heard before. They appeared greatly touched by the affectionate exhortation given them in concluding—to seek the Saviour while yet time was granted them. We were not very well provided with books, and had only some separate Gospels to dispose of, but Mr. Shakoore gave one of these to each, which were thankfully accepted ; and one, as he took it, said with real feeling, “ Sir, you have been sent here, I am sure, by God, for the saving of our souls ; we did not know these things before, and certainly God has sent you ! ” This poor man was very anxious that his new friends should visit him the next morning, but, though they would gladly have done so, it proved impossible. In the middle of the night a rushing sound alarmed every one ;

and, on looking out, it was seen that the water, let out for irrigation, had carried its flood to within two feet of the little mud wall which was our feeble protection ! The neighbouring villages were surrounded by water, and between us and the hamlet in which our Coptic acquaintance dwelt was a new-made lake instead of the plain of sand on which we had walked the previous day. It is not usual to have any sort of inundation in winter (and this was January), but the Nile had risen too slightly that summer, and the higher lands had been unwatered, and the Government had, therefore, cut the embankments of certain districts at this unusual time. The view was exceedingly curious and beautiful, for the verdure on the low lands was now *met*, as it were, by pools and lakes of water, which reflected the clear blue of the sky ; and the groups of palms standing out of the water, or fringing the banks, prevented the monotony which might have attached to the wide expanse of nearly flat country between the Nile and the desert. We enjoyed, in fact, the beauty of winter and autumn Nile scenery at once ; the luxuriant green of Egyptian winter, with the abundant water generally belonging to the September and October.

But the way to our new friends' village was cut off entirely for the time—there were no boats, and the huts, with their palm grove, had become an island. Our return to Cairo was even delayed for two days, the road being impassable. The sojourn was so pleasant that this would have scarcely been regretted, only that the stores brought from town were exhausted. The cakes made from flour purchased from the Bedouins were rather bread of affliction, it must be owned, owing to the bitter seeds of a plant called *helby*, which they mix with their wheat while grinding, in the idea that it improves the bread! They had also dates, so *peppered* over with fine sand, as to be gritty under the teeth—(your true Arab of the desert seems quite indifferent to sand in his food, possibly he likes it from long habit). Nothing except milk was to be had that was palatable in fact.

Before long the water had subsided enough to permit us to return safely to Cairo, but the village of the chicken-raiser (for this was the occupation of the Copt who had specially begged the missionary to pay him a visit) was quite out of reach still. Instead of a ride of about three hours—which, before the new road, was the time

usually taken, if going at a quiet pace—we were the whole day in journeying from the neighbourhood of the Great Pyramids to the city; for it was necessary to make a very long circuit, besides waiting for a boat a considerable time at more than one of the canals. We had to imitate the patience of native Egyptians, and sit on a bank of dry mud for nearly two hours in one place. It was late in the evening when we reached the mission residence, though we had set out at eight in the morning. The old Boab (or doorkeeper) left in charge, had given up all expectation of his family's return at such an hour, and gone off to a little festival among his friends, locking up the door and carrying away the key, so that after a day of twelve hours (riding and waiting included), we had the amusement of standing for more than half an hour outside the door before we could gain admittance, and seek the needed repose. At last the messenger appeared running with the key, the old man following full of apologies, and the rather Bedouin-like assemblage of donkeys, laden with rolls of bedding and saddle-bags, from which pans and household articles peeped out, were marched into the court, and all disappeared from the eyes of the

curious groups of children who had stood round laughing at the travellers' perplexities. Such excursions will soon become matters of history alone, for a hotel is being erected at the Pyramids they say—the waiters surely ought to be dressed in the costume of the ancient Egyptians to make it complete !

But whatever be the outward changes, and however incongruous they appear, those who dwell among the people and labour among them, know well that the heart and nature of man are just the same now as they ever were, and that the same perversity that was found in Pharaoh and his servants exists in their descendants (as in other people), for “as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man !”

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRAY SHEEP IN THE WILDERNESS.

ABOUT a year after our sojourn at the Pyramids of Gezeh, I went on an excursion there with some friends, and tried to find out our former acquaintance, but in vain. No one seemed to know them, and the time being short I had no opportunity of making very careful search. From time to time I thought sadly of their isolated condition, and wondered whether temptation had proved too strong, or whether the light that had been sent to them by the instrumentality of God's messengers continued to shine for their once darkened souls. At length an occasion offered for again spending a short time in the same hamlet on the sandy plain, under those wondrous and mysterious monuments of ancient times; and some of our party with a relative from England, to share the interest and be introduced to these curious scenes, were

soon established among the Bedouin huts, and I resolved that no effort should be spared to find out the poor Copts before leaving the neighbourhood; but meantime there was something to be done among those around us. It was early morning, the day after our arrival, that three of the party wandered forth to enjoy the exquisite view in the fresh and somewhat cold air of January, tempered, however, by genial sunshine. Between the pale yellow desert and the rich green of the clover and corn-fields, the water appeared (not now in overflow, but within the usual banks); the pools which on close inspection proved muddy enough, looked blue as the heavens above them at a little distance, and in the clear morning light. Girls with pitchers gracefully poised on their heads were tripping along in every direction; flocks of white geese disporting on the short green grass by the canal or swimming in the pools; camels and buffaloes, led by sturdy peasants, going forth to their labour in the fields; and the palms catching the soft light on their feathery branches, all made a perfect picture: but when we reached the opposite hamlet, and entered its precincts, the charm was greatly diminished. Alongside of



IN AN EGYPTIAN VILLAGE.

every hovel—for few of the habitations were worthy the name of anything better—lay heaps of dirt, rubbish, refuse, vegetables, and dust, which apparently formed the favourite resting-places of the family circle !

We made some inquiries respecting the poor Copt, and after a good deal of trouble learned that he did still live here, and were shown his chicken oven, but he was absent at a distant market. One of the younger missionaries who was with us, now proposed to some of the men, who were loitering about, to read to them ; they agreed, and though of course this was only from curiosity—who can say that some little ray of light may not sometimes penetrate by the door of curiosity ?

One asked if he were a Christian, and the rest of us also, and if we drank spirits ; the two unhappily being associated in the minds of poor Moslem Egyptians, and no wonder, from the disgraceful examples they see in so-called Christians. We explained the difference, and soon a group of turbaned peasants were sitting round and listening to the stranger's book. The women joined the circle, for there is far less restraint in the country than in towns, but their chattering only

interrupted the reader, so I persuaded them to withdraw a little with me, and there seated on a heap of dust and rubbish (for no other place was to be found) we assembled; and a rather bright-looking middle-aged woman said, as she squatted beside me, "Now the lady will read for us, and the words I am sure will be good."

This woman occasionally asked questions while I read, instead of giving the common blind and ignorant acquiescence which is so difficult to deal with: for when a listener says "yes—yes," and you see she does not really *mean yes*, but only says it to save trouble or to please you—you scarcely know where to go next; whereas an intelligent question shows attention, and is hopeful. I was reading the passage in the Gospel of Matthew about laying up treasures in heaven, etc., and gave them an illustration of the vanity of earthly riches by telling them how yesterday one of the gentlemen had found some old coins near one of the pyramids, reminding them that the former owner of this money, though he had had it buried with him (for it was found in a tomb), was forced after all to leave it, for his body was dust, and the money remained indeed, but not for him! "That is true," said she,

“we cannot take anything with us from our earthly goods when we die; but now tell me what is *heavenly* treasure?”

“God’s pardon, and favour, and love,” I replied. “His promises to us all; these are heavenly treasure.” I then tried to explain how the love and mercy of God to sinful man was shown in Christ, and spoke of the necessity of praying that God would teach and enlighten her. “I do pray,” said she, “but that woman cannot, nor she, nor she, none of those know how!” pointing to the circle of poor women clustered round us. Mohammedans usually understand by prayer, the repeating of their own formula, and the ignorant at all events have no idea that any other sort of prayer exists. Few of the women take the trouble to learn this long and tiresome formula, though it is taught to most boys as a matter of course. “But,” said I, “you do not *really* pray any more than your neighbours, for true prayer is asking for something we wish for. Now when you pray you say ‘God is great, God is wonderful,’ and so on.” “Yes—yes,” she replied, and repeated several clauses of the ordinary form, consisting of long epithets. “Well,” I con-

tinued, "if your son," pointing to the half-naked urchin who stood at her knee, "were wanting bread, and came and stood here by you, and said, 'Oh, my mother, thou art good! oh, thou art handsome! oh, thou art clever!' would you get him the bread?" "No, for I should not know what he wanted," she said, laughing. "God certainly *knows* our wants because He knows everything," I said; "but He has *commanded* that we should *ask* for what we wish by praying to Him, and if not we shall not receive. If you go alone and say, 'O God, have mercy on me; I am a sinner, forgive my sins; enlighten me, for I am ignorant!' that would be prayer if it came from your heart." The women were astonished at this, and some laughed, but not mockingly, only as Egyptians often do at any idea that is new and strange, and I went on to explain, as well as I could, our need of a Mediator and Saviour. After we had spent nearly an hour among the people we were quite exhausted, for the sun had become hot, and the odours around us were dreadful, but we felt thankful for the opportunity of speaking to these poor ignorant creatures, and the pure fresh air soon revived us, as leaving the village we walked over

the fields to see a gipsy encampment about half a mile distant.

This was curious and picturesque in the extreme; the gipsies were very civil, and seemed by no means poor; they invited us to sit down on a smart-looking carpet outside their largest tent, and gathered round, chattering and asking questions with the volubility of their race. They had come to sell ornaments and other things to the villagers on account of an approaching festival, but the peasants told us that they bore a very indifferent character for honesty, and pilfered when they could. The young woman who spread the carpet for us was a study for a painter. She would have been quite a beauty but for the breadth of her nose, which gave a rather coarse look to the face, but her eyes were splendid, and her dark skin had a shade of bright colour on the cheeks, like a red apple seen through brown gauze; her stray locks of curly black hair were shaded by a thin veil, and her graceful figure was well set off by a dark muslin dress, worked with gold at the neck, around which she wore several necklaces of bright green beads mixed with scarlet coral and gold coins. Though very amusing *to see*, we could do no good with

these people. When we spoke of reading, they said no book was better worth reading than theirs, and produced a manuscript Arabic book with many figures and signs as well as writing, which proved to be a book of *magic* or sorcery. They would hear of no other, and were chiefly anxious to persuade us to visit them in the evening again. Whether this invitation was given with a view of ridding us of our watches or purses I cannot say, but it was not thought advisable to accept it.

At last the poor chicken-raiser was found, to my great joy, after many unsuccessful attempts. I went one morning alone to the village, where the hatching-oven was, and this time the owner was at home; he instantly recollected me, and ran to salute me with cordial and hearty pleasure in his looks and manner that could not be mistaken. He told me he had called at the place where we were staying the day before, and found all the party gone out (his boy had mentioned that we had come to look for him). "But I not only heard of your coming from your message to my son," said he, "but I also heard in the village of your having come down the other day to buy the barley, and how one of you gave a book to a man here. Now," he added, "come

in—come in, you are very welcome,” and he ushered me into his dwelling as politely as if it had been a palace instead of a hovel. Poor man, his abode was not inviting, I must own—it joined the hatching oven (which always brings abundance of vermin), and the rude entrance was common to man and beast alike, for a great fat sheep was pushed out to make room for me, and neither window nor any sort of furniture was found in it, only a heap of dirty bedding in a dark corner, and two or three coarse earthen vessels! The wife came forward to greet me so warmly that it was evident she had *heard* of her husband’s acquaintance though she had not seen us. She was a pleasing, nice-looking woman, much younger than the man, and surrounded by a whole bevy of little children, ragged and ill kept, but pretty in spite of all, from their bright intelligent eyes and shining white teeth. I told them of the illness of one of the Mr. Shakoors, which prevented his coming to visit them, as he would have liked to do, and also how we had vainly tried to find them, and asked after his brother and friend, who I found were at Gezeh on business. He had not forgotten the conversations and preaching of two years ago, but the Gospel given

him had been, he said, torn by some of his younger children (for he had neither box nor shelf, and the hut was filled with children, goats, sheep, and chickens). He promised that if I would give him the one in my hand—a Gospel of John—he would take great care of it, and always keep it in the inner pocket of his vest. He declared he would read from it to his wife, and she said she would gladly listen. “For,” she observed, “we know it is God’s Word.”

Both begged me to read to them now, and listened earnestly while I read the fourth chapter, and conversed about it. The woman showed an interest unusual in Egyptian women. It was difficult to leave the poor people, they were so urgent for me to remain; and when at last it was necessary to go, they pressed me to stay and dine with them. I thanked them for their hospitality, but declined it; and as a messenger had come to summon me to join the cavalcade on the journey homeward, I bade farewell to my friends, commending them to the Lord. We hoped next season to visit them, and see how the work of grace prospered, but it was ordered otherwise. A violent overflow of the river inundated all the villages in that and many other regions in

the autumn, and the people were scattered, and the house where we had stayed utterly destroyed. But the great Shepherd of the flock who had sent his servants to bring his Word there, will not have forgotten the sheep that was lost in the wilderness.



BY THE NILE.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON VISITING.

WE are so occupied with a work, which for various reasons is chiefly among the poorer classes of people, that we know comparatively little about the great families, who are not only few in number, of course, relatively to the less wealthy, but who are much more difficult of access.

The sort of mystery and romance hanging around "Hareem life" in European ideas, make some persons wonder that I have not taken more pains to penetrate their closed doors, but the fact is, that a great deal of time and trouble would be expended without doing good, and this being my object, I prefer visiting among the humbler people. The Pashas of rank and wealth in Egypt are (or were till very recently) all Turks, and their families, consisting of a number of slaves purchased usually at Constantinople, though of Circassian and Georgian race, speak scarcely

anything but Turkish. Some, indeed, who have been long resident can talk Arabic, but never employ it if they can avoid it, and many do not even know more than sufficient to call about to their servants. I have not leisure to acquire another language, and could not therefore talk to them except in Arabic, unless to the few, and these chiefly among the mere children who have had European teachers and speak French. But, as far as I can learn, Turkish is the only key likely to reach their hearts at all. The great difficulty, next to language, in reaching the wealthiest class of women (I will not call them the *higher* class, because I reckon a free-born woman, however poor, much higher than a poor thing whose parents sold her for money)—the *next* great difficulty then is, that of getting their permission to go and see them. They are surrounded by every luxury that money can purchase, and every pleasure except those of freedom and of intellect, which they have no desire for, never having known them; and they receive visits from European ladies now and then on occasions of ceremony, etc., and see plenty when driving about in the winter, when visitors are numerous in Cairo, so that they have no particular curiosity

about our ways, and dress, and appearance, and no wish to become acquainted. In India, the zenana, answering in some measure to the hareem, appears to be a dreary abode, with neither garden nor rich furniture, and where the fair prisoners must remain within four walls, save on rare occasions; here, on the contrary, the women of rich families are driving about, shopping, and visiting friends half the day, and always have fine gardens, full of fruit and flowers, for their use; besides that not a few go every summer to Constantinople, and others to Alexandria. European civilization has so far penetrated the hareems as to bring a few ladies from France and England as instructresses to some of the greatest families, but these as yet are exceptional cases, and even these are restricted to purely secular instruction, with the utmost rigour in general. The average have received the mere outside of cultivation, which does no real good, and *some* things that do harm: by the outside I mean new materials for dress, articles of *virtu*, and so forth; by those that do *harm* I mean the permission given to many of those secluded ladies to attend theatres, behind a screen it is true, and the plays carried on in an unknown tongue; but still the

whole concern is likely to injure rather than to benefit them. And unhappily it is much easier to do harm than good. One who wishes to foster their passion for dress and jewellery—already far too great—could easily gain admission, no doubt, but any one armed with the Gospel of peace would not find the doors readily opened. We must take comfort, however, in recollecting that Divine love much oftener works up from a humble origin than downwards. The Gospel preached first to poor fishermen in Galilee reached Cæsar's household in time.

I have occasionally had a peep at one or two of the great families formerly, and will describe the first visit I ever paid to a hareem, just as a contrast to the many visits subsequently made to mud huts under the palms, or to the dwellings of artisans and small tradespeople in the streets and lanes of the city. There was a good deal of ceremony and trouble about going, I recollect; the lady who was taking me had to send a messenger to ask leave to call, and two or three messages were exchanged before the day and hour could be fixed. The family was that of a wealthy Pasha—not one connected with the reigning family at all, but a “great man”—and one

who had visited Paris, and Vienna also, I believe. He was a Turk by race. Knowing something of European customs, he was polite enough to come himself to the great saloon, into which the black slave brought us, and conducted us to his ladies' apartment. The French broadcloth dress which is now universal among Turks of the higher order, is unfortunately unsuited to their dark complexion, and I regretted the graceful turban, in which many an Egyptian peasant looks as dignified as a prince. The change which late years have brought in the furniture of many of the grand houses is no less to be regretted as both less suitable to the climate, and far less beautiful than their own. The carpets of small size, from the famous looms of Damascus and Persia, are easily taken up in warm weather, and as rich in hue and as durable as they are tasteful; while huge gaudy carpets from England and France cannot be quickly removed, and will not bear the *searching* sunshine of Egypt. The prints on the walls (for though Mohammedans, they had a number hanging up) were of a cheap, vulgar kind, such as we see in third-rate French coffee-houses, and the large gilt mirrors and French clocks, though really handsome, looked terribly un-

Eastern, and out of keeping with the antique ceiling and Oriental style of building. We were presently ushered into the ladies' set of apartments, which were plainer and in better taste, and furnished with a long, low divan, instead of the gilt chairs of the saloon, covered with handsome brocade. The head lady was a woman of middle-age, but still very pretty, with soft Georgian features, dark eyes, and fair skin. As it was cold weather, she was muffled in a fur-lined coat, rather like a man's, so that not much splendour of dress could be seen except in the jewels (of immense value, as I presume) that hung round her neck and adorned the muslin kerchief on her head, which was of a dusky green, on purpose to set off the diamonds. She was pleasant and kind in her manners, but her conversation was confined to salutations and dumb show, for at that time I knew only a few phrases and words of Arabic; and she, I was told, only spoke it a little, as she was half the year in Constantinople, and looked on Turkish as her own language, having long forgotten the Georgian dialect. The usual tiny cups of coffee, in *zerfs*, or holders of silver, were handed round by negresses, of whom a whole bevy were coming and going incessantly,

gaily dressed in bright coloured print jackets and trousers, and wearing bracelets of silver, gold, and beads on their black arms. One or two white women stood behind their lady, and after a little, pipes were offered to them as well as to the rest of the circle. Then the lord and master again joined us, and interpreted a few sentences of ours to his wife, for he spoke French tolerably well. But, unluckily, she had nothing to say, so his powers as interpreter were not severely taxed. He presently said we should see his last purchase—a young girl of a mountain tribe in Caucasus, which he named, but I forgot the name; he told us they were a very independent, haughty set of people, and it was very rare to obtain one as a slave; unlike the Circassians, who eagerly sell their girls, and bring them up to *long* for the gilded cages of the Turks.

The lady wife did not look particularly delighted, but signed to a black slave to summon the young mountaineer, who came in slowly and reluctantly, with a sullen expression, which it was impossible to blame. She was very pretty. “I wanted you to see her, because she is like your countrywomen,” the master had coolly observed; and indeed the auburn hair, blue eyes, and fair

complexion, and the tall figure and determined expression, reminded one of many an English maiden who would prefer death to captivity. I felt so indignant and full of pity ; as to the others, pity would have been quite thrown away, they were so perfectly content. The lady's baby was then brought for inspection, dressed in silk and ornamented with jewels, and then we took our leave, for where one cannot talk, a visit is not interesting enough to bear being prolonged beyond three quarters of an hour. The same ceremonies of salutations, and passing through long suites of rooms, were observed as on our entrance ; slaves abounded everywhere, especially black ones, mostly loitering about and doing nothing. The whole was full of wealth, but very unlike a *home* I thought, and very stupid.

A few years later I was no longer a stranger passing a winter in Egypt, but a resident, and paying visits frequently enough, and a curious contrast these were to the first which I have just described. Now my visits were to the dwellings of the poor chiefly, and to the natives of the soil, the descendants of those who had probably worked under the Pharaohs, and not to the palaces of foreigners filled with slaves from

distant lands. To me they were more interesting, as being the people of the country, to say nothing of the earnest desire and hope of doing some little good among them ; so that the little inconveniences and disagreeables connected with such visits were comparatively trifling. Sometimes I went to the houses of neighbours whose children I wished to try and win for scholars at the school I was endeavouring to organize, and these houses were generally old and half decayed buildings, that had once been of a better kind and fallen out of repair ; but some were of a still humbler description, consisting of a sort of stable and court below, and rude mud-brick steps outside, leading to a couple of small rooms, and a wretched terrace, all rubbish and dirt above. In some places these were nothing but mere hovels, built round a sort of court, common to several families, in which the children grovelled in heaps of dust, and flies swarmed around. Yet not a few bright faces would be seen amidst even these, and in the more respectable habitations some very pleasing women were occasionally to be found. When I first visited the poor in Cairo I was accompanied by the matron I had at that time as assistant in the new school (the opening

of which has been described in "Ragged Life in Egypt)." With this good woman's help a little way was made in the immediate neighbourhood of the school-house, but my return for a season to Europe interrupted our efforts, and on coming back to reside permanently, I had to begin again, this time alone; and the visits were rather difficult work for awhile. The teachers did not like to visit among the Mohammedan mothers, nor indeed among the poor at all, as they were afraid of not being well received, and shrank from the difficulties. Indeed, there *were* a good many hindrances, and their youth was against their going to beat up new ground. At the risk of appearing to repeat, I will give a few extracts from notes made subsequent to the publication of "Ragged Life."

I had taken a little pupil to show me the way to some houses in our neighbourhood where I thought we might find children whose parents would send them to the school, if one could make friends with them a little, perhaps. I desired the girl to ask a child who was playing in the dust, where she lived, and if her mother was at home. The only reply elicited was a rather sulky "Don't know!" "Would you like to go to school and

learn to read and sew?" said the *decoy duck* child. "Don't want;" and still more sulky looks. "There, never mind; she doesn't want," cried the pupil; "let her alone, pray." However, I was not so easily daunted, and talked kindly to the child, telling her some things about the school, and at length a smile appeared on the little brown face, and a row of white teeth appeared. She yielded, and guided us through the narrowest lane I have yet been in, a real "needle's eye" for narrowness, as a laden camel must have had his burden removed before attempting to get through it.

The house of the little girl's mother was not, however, worse than others. We found a woman with fine black eyes, engaged in sifting flour, as she squatted on the mud floor, and two others were sitting by; one of these was a Copt, she told us, the others Moslems. The gold coins round their necks were sufficient to have built a house, I should think, but their dress was the ordinary dark blue cotton, which looks black at a little distance, worn by almost all the peasant class of women. They were very civil, and one brought a little stool with very short feet, which she placed for me. I told them about the school,

and my wish to benefit the girls of the place, whether Copt or Moslem, alike. They agreed it was better for girls to learn sewing and reading than to play in the street all day, and two of them promised to send their children next day. The promise does not *always* mean anything but a polite dislike to refuse a well-meant offer, and say no, but *sometimes* it is kept, and one must hope for the best. I took leave with a civil good-bye on both sides.

Some of the visits, however, were not in any way connected with the school. Being in the country, here is a short description from a journal written some few years ago, which is a fair specimen of country villages and their people.

“ We had an interesting ride to the village of M—— yesterday. The place lying rather low is considered damp in autumn, after the inundation, but now at the end of December is dry enough. The green *barseem* (or Egyptian clover) is just coming up, and looks delightfully fresh, and the cliffs of Gibel el Hasheb are just discernible in the distance, with gardens, fields, and villas between the desert and the river, forming a bright picture on a sunny winter’s day in Egypt. At an open spot just outside the village, a barber

was shaving a peasant's head, and, as usual, a group were assembled near him chatting and smoking, for at this season there is less to be done in the fields than at some others, and early in the afternoon many of the men appeared at leisure. Mr. Shakoor took advantage of this, and resolved to join the party of men, and get into conversation, while I went a little further in search of some women. I soon found four or five with some little girls, all sitting upon a dust heap! They looked very dirty, as well they might, but I remembered who can "raise up the beggar from the dunghill and make him to sit among princes" (Samuel i.). I saluted the poor women in a friendly way, and though looking astonished they replied civilly. One was working on a pair of red print trousers, the rest doing nothing. After a little chat and a few questions on both sides, I asked if they had ever heard about our first parents Adam and Eve, and how sin came into the world. They just knew the names, but no more, and were pleased to listen while I related the story. Before I had finished, an old woman who had come up, interrupted me, and began telling about certain birds which she said flew about in paradise; some legend or fable,

of which they have plenty, that mix a little truth with a great deal of invention. A young man who was standing near and listening, desired her was not to interrupt the lady, for he could see she learned, and 'thou art ignorant,' he added with more truth than politeness. I told him that in my country, women as well as men learned to read, and that it was good for many reasons, but especially for this, that God's Word could be read by all. I then produced my Testament and showed it to him. 'Is it really Arabic?' the women asked eagerly of him, for the *common* people have no respect for a book in any other characters. The young man, though not able to read fluently, knew his letters, and picked out a word or two; he assured them it was really Arabic, and handed it to me, begging me to read a little out of it. 'But you are not well placed here,' he said, pointing to the heap on which they were seated, and which was certainly very unpleasant. 'Come to the roof of my house, my mother will show you the way, and these women can come too, if they like.' I acceded to this courteous invitation, and followed the mother and son up the mud-brick steps leading to a rude terrace, on which the

husks of maize were spread ; and though anything but clean, it was a great improvement on what we had left, and with genuine kindness the old woman brought out an old but well preserved carpet, and spread it for me. The others had followed, and sat round to hear what the stranger could have to read to them. They really seemed interested, though sometimes interrupting me with remarks not at all to the purpose. I managed to bring them back to the stories I read, of course choosing the simplest possible, and trying to explain a little as we went. The young man observed it was no use teaching them ‘for they are *cattle*—the women here—and have no sense,’ said he. The poor mother meekly assented, saying, ‘It’s true, I am a beast,’ looking half sadly and half smiling at her son. I patted her on the shoulder encouragingly, as they do here when they want to comfort any one, saying, ‘No, good mother, not so ; for beasts have no souls, and you have. You do not understand because you have not been taught early, and besides I am a foreigner, and perhaps do not say all the words right, but now listen and I will try to make it plain to you. Listen to our dear Lord’s own words.’ I then read some passages

over again slowly and carefully, and they seemed to be pleased ; even the poor mother said she understood better this time.

“ I heard Mr. Shakoor below, inquiring for me in some anxiety, as I had disappeared and was quite hidden by the heaps of straw on the roof. A child at last had directed him to the house, and I came down after promising to call another day. The men had not been unwilling to listen, and more than twenty had assembled to hear the Scripture ; the difficulty, however, is not on the first so much as on subsequent visits, for on a first occasion curiosity leads many to come and hear who do not really care. Still we must rejoice when we have an opportunity like this, and we returned very thankful for our visit.”

On a subsequent occasion I came to see this family with Mrs. Shakoor, and we were introduced to the wife of the young man alluded to, and were not a little surprised to find nearly an idiot, or what would in Ireland be called a natural. The mother told us she had arranged this singular union (I think it was on account of some property attached to the young person of weak intellect), and she added that she had sense enough to light a fire and fetch water, and,

though not able to speak beyond a few words, she could say "Salamat!" (answering to How do you do?). This accomplishment she displayed for our benefit with a sheepish smile, and then trotted off with her pitcher, in obedience to a nod from the mother-in-law. A wife being chiefly wanted as drudge, intellect was of small importance, and powers of conversation could be dispensed with.

Occasionally I have to pay visits among a different class from any hitherto described, into the families of respectable and sometimes wealthy native Christians, or those of Oriental Christians of other countries settled in Egypt. Of course there is nothing of hareem life in the strict sense, as plurality of wives, is not permitted by any of their churches, but it is strange how the Moslem custom of secluding the women has been adopted by those dwelling among them. The veiling of the face has also been adopted, and among the Copts as much shutting up as among their neighbours, often more, prevails; some, however, are by degrees relaxing a little in this respect, and some Coptic women are allowed to go out from time to time, and even to visit and shop pretty freely. Others, again,

are as closely secluded as if they were actual denizens of a hareem; nearly all keep black female slaves instead of hiring servants, and the evils of such a system may be easily imagined. One day Mrs. Shakoor and I went to visit a lady in one of the wealthiest Coptic families, and saw no less than ten negresses in her kitchen as we passed the open door on our way upstairs. Another showed us the way, and I believe one or two more were about the house with the children, yet with all these nominal assistants, the beautiful furniture was ill-cared for, and in every available corner some sort of rubbish peeped out—crusts of bread and bits of orange peel under a splendid clock on a marble table; worn-out old slippers under a gilt bed covered with silk, etc. And it was evident that a single servant, if active and clever, would be worth all the twelve or thirteen women bought with money and held in forced servitude. They do not usually seem ill-treated, though I have heard occasional instances of cruel mistresses, but generally the black women are merry, fat, and well dressed, and certainly not overworked, but are often great thieves, and seldom moral. The sweet-looking, gentle lady of the house I

allude to, would be, I fancy, a mistress rather easily imposed on, if one could judge by faces, and not at all tyrannical. She was very pleasing and graceful, dressed in delicate printed muslin (for it was summer time) made in a vest called a *yelek*, with long skirts, the ends drawn through the sash, and full trousers of the same, no frippery of any sort, but a necklace of jewels. We conversed with her for some time, and tried to interest her in the "better part," and wished to induce her to visit us in return. We had been specially invited to call, but I suppose the gentleman was not in the habit of letting his wife go out much, for she never came though living only a few streets off.

The Syrian families long settled in Cairo have in most cases assimilated themselves in many points to the Copts—adopting the black silk habarsah (like a great shroud) for going out, etc., and now and then intermarrying with them—but with those who are more recent settlers, much of their own ways remain; they are usually energetic and lively, and anxious for the education of their children; but those who are Maronites, or of the Latin church, are a good deal influenced by the priests, and often send their children to convents,

where their minds are *narrowed* up as it were, and the Scripture is very little taught. Though often quick in learning by rote, I usually find children who have been in convent schools very dull at answering any questions demanding the least *thought*—their natural intelligence is blunted by the system of learning without understanding, and their eyes open wide with amazement on hearing the scholars questioned as to the *meaning* of what they read.

But to return to the visits. Of course there is a great variety of habits and ways, but yet a sufficient resemblance to enable one to know how to conduct oneself with them. On knocking at the door of a house occupied by persons of respectability and even affluence, but living in a quiet modest way, there is seldom a servant to answer the summons, but a rope is pulled by the slave upstairs, or by the mistress if she is not on the spot, which draws up the latch, and admits the guest; this is seldom done, however, till the question, “Who is it?” has been asked and satisfactorily replied to. Then one has to find one’s way up stairs which are often almost dark, and I must allow very often dirty even in good houses. No one of the better classes in Cairo thinks of occu-

pying the ground floor, which is kept for stables, etc. If the lady happens to be engaged in household occupations, superintending "the wash," or in the kitchen, she has no false shame in letting it be seen, but merely begs her visitors to wait a moment in the sitting-room, and joins them after having given orders to the negress about the sherbet and coffee, which are shortly served at intervals, the former always first; frequently, but not invariably, a glass dish of preserve is first handed round, the coffee always being last. After the salutations and inquiries after the members of the respective families are over, a few questions on any subject interesting, or supposed to be so, follow, and when there is a pause, usually the compliments are repeated, "You are welcome; we are glad to see you; how is your health?" etc.* In Syria many women of education are now to be found, but in Cairo such a one would be a *rare bird*, and I have never met any; conversation therefore is necessarily confined to domestic matters, dress, or gossip. We do not encourage these last, and endeavour to get in something that will profit where it is possible. Their man-

* No cards are used if the person visited is absent, and the visit seems to go for nothing in that case.

ners are generally pleasing and graceful, and a visitor is always welcomed in a way that makes her feel at home. If there is any degree of intimacy, however slight, the mistress of the house will almost forcibly take away the out-door dress of her friends, and when they speak of leaving will sometimes refuse to bring them their shawls, etc., insisting on their delaying. A morning visit usually occupies an hour, and often more, and I have had lady visitors who stayed so long that it was a great stretch of politeness not to show one's weariness. But northern politeness is far outdone by Eastern courtesy; however long their visitors linger, no sign of fatigue or of wanting to be gone to their business appears outwardly, and if a meal-time is near, the chance comer is cordially pressed to share. The gentlemen of the family do not often show themselves (unless it be dinner-time), but now and then they are at home, and will join the wife and mother or sister, and her friends for a few minutes; but as a general custom, the female guests are received in a different apartment from the men's, both among Copts and Oriental Christians of other races settled among them. Of course this refers to people who are more or less wealthy;

but even among the poor, visitors are separated as much as their accommodation allows. In the next chapter I will give a few more descriptions of visits, as a somewhat lengthened acquaintance with different families enables me to do.



THE VEIL.

CHAPTER XIV.

VISITING,—CONTINUED.

It is fortunate that among the many hindrances to our work in Egypt we have not to deal with the caste system, which is so great a trial to all who desire to do good in India. There is, in fact, much less difficulty than in England in assembling together children of various classes. If now and then a proud mother tosses up her head and says her girl is not used to associate with the children of Fellaheen or peasants, it generally turns out that she is not a native Egyptian. Among the children of the soil there is rarely any trouble of this kind, and I must say that there is very little difference of manners and habits among them; those, indeed, who were always playing in the streets till they came to school, are more troublesome in many ways than those more carefully looked after, but this is far from being a test of the parents' position in life ;

many rich people being more careless than some of the more respectable poor ones in this respect. We have, both among boys and girls, some scholars whose families are comparatively wealthy, many who are artisans and small tradesmen, and not a few of the very humblest position, including one family whose father is a beggar. Yet all sit on the same benches and receive the same advantages, and generally get on very well together. From this it happens that I have acquaintances in very different positions : some of the mothers do not care to receive strangers, but in general they are pleased at being visited by the superintendent of their children's school, and some openings for good have been made in several families in this. One day I went to a respectable though poor Moslem family with whom I had been long acquainted. The father I saw very rarely, of course, yet I had sometimes met him, and knew that he was of a rather bigoted turn, but personally civil and even friendly ; the mother and daughters I knew more or less for years, and the younger ones had been scholars (one of whom was dead). The lane was dirty and disagreeable, and with some neighbours whose slovenly habits and frequent bad language

made the "quarter," as a certain district is called, not a pleasant one ; but the interior, when I had made my way up the steps (unannounced), was tolerably clean and comfortable, according to the style of the country. The ground floor, as usual in the city, except among quite poor persons, was given up to the stable, oven, and cooking place. Upstairs dwelt two families, each having two rooms of small size, but a wide passage between each of the two, called a *fesshar* or *jezzhar*, almost formed an additional room, and in summer was always used as such in preference, as being more airy.

A voice called out, as I ascended, to ask who was there, and on being answered, shouted a welcome ; and presently a woman, somewhat past middle-age, dressed in a long dark blue mantle, which served as veil, gown, and cloak all, together, and concealed the scanty inner garment of a still darker cotton, came to greet me on hearing my voice, and gave me a very cordial welcome, mixed with reproaches for not having come sooner. "It is so long I have not seen your face, and neighbour Hosna told me you were in our quarter a week ago, and never came to this house !" I assured her this was a mistake, as I

had called, but found she was gone to market. "Well, what lies people tell! they are jealous and like to vex one, but never mind; praise God you are here now; and how is the young lady and the little ones, and the gentleman, and how is your health?" After all inquiries were satisfactorily replied to, she slipped away, leaving me seated on the mat with a young woman who had just joined us, and whom she introduced as a new occupant of the other part of the house, and a Copt. A very dirty, but pretty little child was on the young Copt's lap, and I inquired its name, etc., to make acquaintance with the mother. The hostess presently returned with coffee, which she insisted on making, though I had begged her not to trouble herself; and while we sipped the little cups, I asked the Coptic woman if she had ever heard any part of the Gospel. She thought they read some in the church, but appeared doubtful; in fact, a portion of their service is in old Coptic, which none of them understand, and of the part read in Arabic, if read rapidly and without pause or explanation, not much would probably reach the understanding of a totally untaught and ignorant person. I found that the Moslem woman knew more of the Saviour than the

Copt, for her children having been pupils for several years at our school, some little rays of light about Scripture had reached her through them. I read a chapter from the Gospel of St. Mark, which happened to be with me, and the poor young woman seemed pleased to listen, and the older acquaintance (who is rather apt to prefer talking to listening at all times) was also interested, and we passed a not unprofitable half hour. She begged to hear how the new building for the school went on, and showed great interest in the details of its progress. "My girl," said she, "was telling her father yesterday about it, and how your house is not to be built first, but the school, and how all the first rooms are nearly done, and he felt this very much; he said they really love the children, and wish for their good the first thing. May God prosper the work and bless it." I begged the young Copt not to forget her promise, that if spared she was to send her child (a girl not yet two years old) as soon as it was able to speak, to be in our infant class, and then took a cordial leave of both.

A few days afterwards I was at the house of another scholar's mother, and so different a one

that it was difficult to understand the similarity of dress in the girls—both come in simple loose frocks called “gellebeehs,” of common print, and muslin or gauze veils, slippers in winter, and in summer wooden clogs, into which the little bare feet were thrust when walking, and which were thrown aside while seated. On festivals both would appear in a silk *tob* or outer frock—no difference in rank or in wealth could be observed—yet one was the daughter of an artisan, the other of a tradesman so wealthy that he possesses several houses, and resides in one larger than ours.

I had never been there before, and was quite surprised at the massive house door, with a carved archway, at which the little girl knocked on our arrival; she ushered me through a large courtyard, whose walls were rather out of repair (but showed the solidity belonging to the old style of Egyptian houses), and then up a stone staircase and through sundry curious passages with little places something between an alcove and a room joining them, till we came to a large lofty room furnished with divans and nice carpets. At one end was the raised stone ledge, common in old Oriental dwellings of the better sort, and

all round this ledge was a frame-work of carved wooden lattices in different patterns, very ancient and beautiful. The mother of my little scholar came from an inner room to salute me, and beg me to be seated here in the place of honour—which is always the upper part of the room furthest from the door. She was a pleasing woman, still young, and with frank, cheerful manners; her dress was very plain, only a loose print without any ornament, but she had been engaged in superintending and probably assisting the family baking, and was not prepared for visitors. Domestic occupations are not avoided in the East by many women who could easily pay others to look after their household, but I should be sorry to see them ever lose the reasonable notion that the mistress's eye should be over all her little domain. Many, especially of the Coptic families, give up a great deal too much indeed into the hands of slaves, but unless the head of the household looks carefully after them, slaves are very little to be depended on for comfort or neatness (and no wonder!) The Moslems of a humbler class do not so often keep them, and their houses are, I think, less dirty in consequence. I speak of persons of some respecta-

bility, of course. My hostess conversed with me about the school building, which seemed to interest her very much, and the progress of the child, etc., till her younger sister came in with coffee, which was served from a silver coffee-pot and with silver *zerfs* or holders for the cups; it was in real old Arab style, strong, and with no sugar. The more modern Orientals have introduced sugar, though they never add milk to coffee. There were several relatives who occupied an adjoining house, which was in fact part of the same building, who were introduced to me, but on account of the baking business did not remain long; then a handsome boy of ten or twelve, the only other child that survived of her family, came and sat down by his mother and teased her a little, as boys do. "Go and wash your hands, child!" He wiped them on her gown, laughing in reply. "There, you see what a boy I have," cried the mother, looking proud of him all the time; "and now will you let me show you the rest of the house, we have only taken it a short time, and the whitewashing is not yet finished, for it is old and needed a great deal of cleaning, but yet is more pleasant than the new houses." I agreed cordially with her as I

followed her from room to room, mostly arranged so as to make the great heat endurable, and with infinite taste. The chief "fesshar," or corridor, was opened by means of two large archways to the courtyard, and had wooden pillars and arches along one side whence curtains might be hung in summer, and thus a cool sleeping place secured in the heat of the day—divans being arranged for the purpose. The house must formerly have belonged to great people of some kind, for the kitchen was on a scale I have not yet seen in Cairo ; and the bath-room, oven, stables, etc., were all much more than the present occupants—though wealthy in their way—required. Such houses are only found now *in* the city—that is, not very near the outskirts—and not in the neighbourhoods advantageous for fresh air, etc. But in the great heat they are probably cooler than any other, and the builders were certainly cleverer in those days than at present, for both in beauty and solidity they have the advantage over modern ones.

Very unlike this dwelling, with its spacious rooms and carved niches, was the abode of another little school-girl whom I used to visit

very frequently in a severe illness she had a good while ago. On one of these occasions I found the young patient in a court into which her parents' house and two others opened; she was lying on the bare ground, and with her head actually on, or rather *in* a heap of dirty mud. Her dress had not been changed since the commencement of the illness (about three weeks), and the appearance of utter discomfort and uncleanliness on the poor little face was distressing to witness. After the usual salutations I asked the mother why she had taken the sick child out of bed and put her in the mud. "Oh, to keep her head cool," she replied; "she has fever in her head to-day, and besides, the world is hot!" This last expression is a very frequent one among Egyptian women, and always diverts me, because during our brief winter they are constantly using its contrary, and exclaiming, "The world is cold." The little portion of the world called Cairo certainly *was* hot that day, and perhaps if it had been clean mud, just out of a river, it might not have been so bad, but this was most objectionable, and I mildly remonstrated, suggesting that the cold water bandage I had arranged yesterday was better and cleaner, and

that the damp evaporating on her body as she lay on the ground, would probably increase the fever. I saw that my words produced but a very faint impression on the obstinate woman—her *dogged* look having come over her face—so I sat down in a dry corner and began to peel an orange, and feed the little sufferer with it. “You could not put on some other dress of any kind?” I asked presently; “this is so *very* dirty, I am sure Sadeeka would feel more comfortable if she had another on.” “When she is well, please God, I shall take her to the bath.” And here I ought to observe, in justice to my poor Egyptian friends, that it is their custom after any severe illness to let the person go to the public warm bath and receive a complete ablution (a ceremony by no means universal among the lower class of people in England or Ireland). But then even quite respectable persons will avoid water as carefully as if it were something marked “for interior use only” by a physician—as long as the illness lasts, whether it be little or great—teething children, therefore, are often left for many months without even a face washing. Not a few die in consequence of this wretched idea.

However, in spite of all hindrances, I found my poor young patient somewhat better, and the mother consented to let me give her some more of the remedy that seemed to have benefited her. "And if you would try this wet bandage instead of the mud, it is so nice," I continued in a persuasive manner. The grandmother, strange to say, came to my aid. The old women are usually more bigoted and stupid by far than the young; in this instance she was wiser than her daughter-in-law. "Indeed, what the lady says is very true," she exclaimed; "the girl would be better upstairs, and this place has no air and is not nice; and the medicine has done her good no doubt." The mother looked sullen and made no reply. I turned to other subjects, and talked cheerfully to her, explaining the nature of a little preparation I had brought in my pocket for the sick child, and why something light and delicate was better than the solid food which she so disliked just now. Then I took leave, when she seemed in a better temper; and next day found the mud heap abandoned, and the patient progressing fairly, and was even allowed (after some coaxing) to wash her face and hands. I must not omit to say that in spite of

all their prejudices and superstitions and dislike of innovations, I have in general found them grateful for kindness shown in time of sickness, and in not a few cases it has been remembered for *years*.



BAB-EL-NABR.

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT IN THE DESERT.

ONE day in the beginning of the hot season I rode out at an early hour to visit some poor people dwelling on the borders of the desert, whom I had known for some years. They were of Bedouin race, but not, in appearance, like the pure Bedouin of the desert, who carries his "moving home" from place to place, and, though weather-beaten and sunburnt, is usually a fine-looking handsome creature in his own style, and often possessed of considerable means in the way of flocks and herds, camels and horses.* *These* poor Bedouins were, perhaps, of mixed extraction; at any rate, they were of mean appearance, and had no possessions, except three or four goats and a lame camel. When I first knew them, they lived in a circle of quaint

* The name of "Arab," as applied to poor wandering and *really homeless* children in London, always seems to me very inappropriate, for the wandering Arab's distinction is that he is never homeless!

little huts on the desert: mere round hovels built of loose stones and mud, and with no windows, and a hole for entrance; two or three ragged goat's-hair tents completed the settlement, which was occupied by three families, including (poor as they were) two black slaves. In "Ragged Life in Egypt" there is a mention of this little desert colony, and the blind man, named Suleyman, whom we had visited there. The party was now greatly diminished; they had left their huts, which soon became ruins, and scattered, two families going to a distance, where I could no longer visit them, and the other remaining in the neighbourhood, having pitched their tent and built another hut close to an old and venerated mosque, near the desert town called the Abbaseeh, about three miles from Cairo.

Some of our friends may be surprised and disappointed that, after the lapse of several years, these poor creatures are still so ignorant, and give us so little cause to believe them converts in heart. Yet, if they knew the circumstances, they might not wonder: the distance, in a climate where, for half the year, going far during the chief part of the day is not practicable for any but natives of the country, (if one has any regard

to health), is one great hindrance to frequent visits, and the increasing numbers in our schools is another, as making the duty of superintending their religious teaching the most imperative. An occasional reading, therefore, is all that these poor Bedouins had to enlighten them; while, on the other hand, their present residence among the inhabitants of a miserable little outskirts of the town has brought them more among superstitious, bigoted, and degraded companions than formerly. The unconscious teachers of evil are all around them all day long, and the teachers of good can only pay them visits from time to time, and these but brief. Still, it is not lost trouble, for they desire to hear "the book," as they emphatically call the Gospel, which they know is in the pony's saddle-bag. Suleyman well knows that pony's tread from afar, and, rousing himself from his doze on a sandhill, or, if cold weather, *under* it (for he often buries himself alive in the sand for the sake of warmth in a cold wind), he then hastens towards the approaching steed with words of welcome, and holds the rein, while I descend to sit with him and his old mother (also blind), his sister-in-law, and, if at home, his brother, and another older man belonging to them.

The party are by no means prepossessing to the eye, it must be owned: they are exceedingly dirty and miserable-looking, and one or more has always bad eyes, and the grandmother certainly never can have become acquainted with soap and water during the whole of her life; nor is the seat offered to their visitor inviting, as it consists of an old goat's-hair cloak spread over the rubbish outside the huts. However, the welcome was, as always, hearty and cheerful; many were the inquiries after all the mission family, the school, etc., and, finally, a new baby—a little brown atom, rolled up in a curious medley of rags—was introduced to me, and I was requested to take it in my arms. I, of course, complied, not forgetting to utter a blessing in the name of God aloud, so that the mother might have no fear of the evil eye!

“Have you brought the book?” then asked the old blind woman. “Oh, yes, here it is.” She felt the volume with her fingers, and reverently kissed it; then, commanding the children to be quiet, we began the reading, which I endeavoured, as usual, to make as easy as possible to their ignorant minds, by selecting the plainest portions of the gospel. We were

presently joined by two curious-looking women, almost black, and, though not exactly negro in features, very ugly in their own style, and wearing a number of odd savage ornaments in their ears and noses, and round their necks, such as shells, animals' teeth, coral and glass beads, bits of carved wood and bone, etc. The Bedouin women told me they were the wife and mother of two soldiers from the upper country, who were employed in Government works here. The old one came every year to visit her son, who had been six years in this place, which, I thought, showed great affection in the poor creature, as the journey is a long one. The younger woman, after staying for a while, went away, but the older one remained, listening with wondering attention while I read; and I tried to make some explanations especially for her (speaking as simply as if to a child of four or five years old, of course, for she was utterly ignorant). When I spoke about all men being sinful, the blind man gave a grunt, which plainly showed he did not approve the doctrine; in fact, his self-righteousness has long been, as I believe, the stumbling-block that hinders his accepting the truth. "But, Suleyman," I said, "if you don't disobey

one of God's commands, you disobey another ; if a man, for instance, doesn't steal but tell lies, or if he doesn't tell lies but gets into a passion, is he then not a sinner?" "Well, that is true," he allowed. "Does not the little child, as soon as it can speak, begin to show sin by anger, by selfishness, and other things?" "Yes, yes, indeed," the mother interposed, and the rest nodded in agreement, while I went on to try (not for the first or second time) to show them how greatly we needed a Saviour, since we were sinful and could not save ourselves. "Now, Suleyman, do you know any friend who would die for your sake?" I said at last. He gave a short incredulous laugh as he replied, "No, no, lady ; no one in the world would do that." "I suppose no one would care so much for poor blind Suleyman as to give his blood for his sake?" "No, truly ; no one !" he repeated. "Yet that is just what our Lord Jesus *did*, O Suleyman ! He died, as I often have told you, that all sinners who believe in Him and trust Him may be saved and forgiven, and made happy for ever in heaven. You heard this from me before, and from all of us, but perhaps you forgot it, or else you did not understand that it was for you, as well as others,

that our Lord came to die. It is His Spirit that sends me to speak to you, and tell you these things!" "Wonderful indeed!" said the blind man. "Ay, it *is* wonderful! Truly God's love is very wonderful; and yet you don't seem to believe in it. Some will say, you can be saved by your own good deeds; others by fasting and pilgrimage; others by the prophet: none of these really believe in God's love. It is only He who can save us." "Praise God!" ejaculated Suleyman. "Ah, but it is not saying that which will save you, brother; it is not *speaking*, but *believing* God's word, and giving Him the heart."

The woman (his sister-in-law) now interposed, and said, "Sitt M., I will show what I mean by a parable" (or *example*; the word is the same in common Arabic). "Suppose," she continued, "that I did not love you—it is only a story, you know, for I love you truly—but suppose you were a kind lady, and yet still I did not love you, from something in my heart; if my heart was *hard*—how shall I say it; but you know what I mean—what, then, could I do?"

"I see," said I; "you mean that you can't love God because your heart is hard by nature,

like *this*," and I tapped on the great stone water jar that lay beside me ; " is that so ? "

" Yes, yes ! " she cried, striking the jar, " that's it ; *stony* ! "

" Then, dear sister, I have a word from God exactly for you ! " I said ; " only listen," and then I quoted, as well as I could from memory (for I had not a whole Bible with me), the text from Ezekiel, " I will take away the heart of stone," etc.

" Ah, that is good indeed," she said ; " it is sweet ! "

Now, why I wrote down this conversation (which is given exactly as it took place, only somewhat abbreviated) was, that self-righteousness being deeply ingrained in all Moslems, it was exceedingly rare to hear any avowal like this. Suleyman was far from sharing his sister-in-law's feeling, evidently, though he did not disagree with what she said outwardly. However, I profited by her little simple parable to urge her to pray for a changed heart through the Saviour. By this time I was obliged to hasten away, as the sun was getting hot, and we had been reading and talking a long while.

It was not very frequently that I was able to

visit this family, for when the hot season set in it was too great a distance to go and return, staying an hour or more, the road affording no shade. Formerly, they were more within reach, being scarcely more than half an hour's ride from the city, and the colony had then consisted of many more persons, so that we were sure to find some at home; whereas now, after a long and fatiguing ride, sometimes the whole party would be absent, and their hovel deserted. Still, I never lost sight of them; in cool weather I came every two or three weeks at least, and with varying success tried to keep alive the little fire of interest in heavenly things which smouldered, as it were, under the ashes of worldly thoughts and degraded habits. It is not in the beginning that we find our greatest difficulty (great though that is)—the continuing to read and preach when the mere novelty is gone, is the hardest part of the work. One day I would find them willing to listen, and, seemingly, quite alive to the wondrous fact of God's love; the next visit they would seem as if they had spiritually fallen back into the dust and dirt amid which they so literally dwelt!

On such occasions my old blind woman would

say "Good, good!" and then pay not the slightest attention, her mind being full of her goats, which once or twice actually galloped over me and my book (but I did not let such a trifle discompose me more than it did her!), and she would say very coolly, "Let Aeeda listen to-day," meaning her daughter-in-law.

The filthy habits and miserable abodes of the poor creatures had, doubtless, an effect in stupefying the mind, for, though they reside in the finest spot for air that could possibly be found, their hovels are only entered by a sort of hole, and have no windows, so that they resemble wild beasts' dens.

Occasionally, however, neighbours would join the company of hearers, and though their children, of course, added to the hindrances, by the noise they made, yet, more than once, very interesting meetings took place. One of these I will give, from a journal of last year. The blind man, with the women of his family (the other men being absent), was listening to a portion of Scripture which I was reading to him one Saturday morning, when a soldier, in the maroon-coloured uniform of the Viceroy's body-guard (eight men who always ride after his carriage),

came and sat beside us on the sand, and said he had seen the lady giving some eye-water to one of the children, and wished to know if she was a doctor. This honour was disclaimed, but, in simple cases, I told him I could give remedies, and had some experience; did he want eye-water? No; he was suffering with rheumatic pain in his arm, and begged for advice, which was willingly given. He then took up the book, and began to examine it curiously. I asked him if he could read; he answered by reading in a distinct voice, though with a slight hesitation (from the style being quite new to him), part of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, and then asked some questions about it, which I replied to as well as I could. He then addressed the blind man, and expressed his wonder at seeing a stranger in such a place, and hinted pretty broadly that he would like to know what brought a "Frank" among those huts. Suleyman, upon this, burst forth with a really touching account of his long acquaintance with the mission family. "This lady, and those of her household, have known me for years!" said he, "and read to me and my family from that good book, all about our Lord Jesus; many sweet words

from God are in it, and we like to hear; besides, they love the poor, they have covered my shoulders from the cold, winter after winter, and given us medicine when sick. But it is not for us only;” and he then gave a minute account of the two schools. How, being blind, and only having been once or twice to our house, and that very long ago, he had gained such a knowledge of all the studies of the children, and their numbers, etc., I cannot imagine, unless he had learned it from questioning the servant who came with the pony, but certainly he accurately enumerated the Turkish, English, and other lessons of the boys, and the sewing and embroidery of the girls, adding, “They are all taught to read this good book, and all is not for money, but from love. They love God—love the poor. There are among their scholars Moslems and Christians, and all received alike and treated alike.”

The soldier listened attentively to this history; and when the poor blind man paused, quite out of breath with his vehemence, his auditor observed thoughtfully, shaking his head, “A Moslem would not love us thus!”

He had come to this place, it seemed, to see his wife, who lived in a hut in this wretched-

looking outskirts—though he looked so grand that he was a great contrast to the poor Bedouins. Before leaving, I offered him a sheet with some gospel texts printed on it in Arabic, and he willingly accepted it. A few days later, as I was riding near the town, the viceregal train passed, with its numerous outriders, carriages, and guards mounted on beautiful grey chargers: one of these made a graceful salaam as he passed me—it was my acquaintance of the desert.

His wife, on another occasion, came to join the Bedouin family in listening to the Scripture, saying to me, “I am the wife of the man to whom you gave the paper; my husband has kept it ever since: you must let me come and hear, therefore.” Of course I gladly consented, but at my next visit she was not there; all those soldiers’ families, indeed, were gone, and I saw them no more.

CHAPTER XVI.

PILGRIMS TO MECCA.

It was a bright morning early in March, and the waves of the Red Sea were plashing gently on their golden-coloured sands in hues of indescribable green and blue, so delicate, and yet so brilliant, that a painter's art is sorely tried in the endeavour to represent them.

The little town of Suez, with its narrow streets of mud-brick, and its two or three white houses near the sea, where Europeans reside, presented, as usual, a busy scene. People of all races were mingling in the open market-place, and clamouring in so many different tongues, as to make the listener think of Babel at the dispersion. Here passed a ragged Bedouin from the desert, in striped abba of rough goat's hair, leading a stately camel; there a party of boatmen, bronzed and sturdy-looking, and pushing through them came a negro from the interior,

seeming even blacker than others from the effect of his white turban and tunic. Then you met a group of chattering Greeks trying to cheat a European traveller, their untidy dress and dirty faces giving them an unprepossessing appearance; and you turned with pleasure to observe a couple of Arab chiefs from Jeddo, in crimson and apple-green caftans and snowy muslin turbans, whose dignified bearing and quiet manners were a complete contrast. Then the sound of the English tongue arrested your attention, and, alas! it was from British sailors staggering out of a tavern more than half tipsy, and thus setting a deplorable example to the natives of the country. Indeed, the mixed population of Italians, Maltese, Greeks, and others, besides the incessant arrivals of foreign sailors, bring great evils on Suez, and exhibit Europeans in a particularly unfavourable light. The outskirts of the town are not safe to camp in, and travellers are warned to beware of passing the huts of the Greek labourers at the new canal after the sun is set.

But the outward view is as bright and fair as the hearts of men are dark; and on the day I speak of, the white sails glistened in the sunshine, and

the little boats danced on the clear green waves, as if there were no darkness or gloom in the world. The long range of cliffs (belonging to the Sinai chain), which are visible on the Asiatic side of the coast of the Red Sea, still wore their delicate rose hues, which subside as the morning advances towards noon, and leave them more or less hazy till an hour or two before sunset, when more than the morning beauty clothes them with celestial colouring, such as is never seen in our northern latitudes, and which almost atones for the want of northern verdure. Not a tree, not a blade of grass, is to be seen on the barren coast of Suez and its neighbourhood ; only a plant or two, reared with difficulty in a balcony here and there, shows that vegetation *can* exist. Probably the "sweet water" canal may in time alter this state of things, but so it is at this present. Would that the water of life, the true "sweet water," might also flow into the parched and arid soil of men's souls, and change them into "watered gardens," bringing forth fruit meet for the Lord !

Among the many vessels gliding about in the harbour of the Red Sea on the day to which I am alluding, was a large Arab vessel, old, ill-

built, as far as unprofessional eyes could judge, and certainly overcrowded with passengers. It was at anchor, and either intended to sail with the next tide, or to wait for a day or two more to get provisions, or to be yet further crammed with living cargo.

For it was a pilgrim ship, and these are usually filled to a most dangerous degree with pilgrims of all classes, travelling to Mecca, the holy city of the Mohammedans. Not unfrequently does one of these heavy-laden and ill-built ships founder in a storm between Suez and Jeddo—a port ten days lower down on the Red Sea,—and then the whole troop of misguided creatures are hurried into a watery grave; which, however, they are said not to regard with terror, at least, beforehand,—because they are taught that dying on so holy a journey will secure them a place in the paradise of Mohammed.

If, however, the vessel meets with fair weather, and arrives safe at Jeddo, they proceed on camels for ten or twelve days more, through a burning desert, and finally encamp outside Mecca.

And then commences a formula of religious

ceremonies, some of which are evident remnants of paganism ; as, for instance, those connected with the caba, or holy black stone, venerated by the heathens of Arabia in old times.

After a long course of vain rites, etc., the pilgrim bands turn their faces towards their distant and various homes, and go through the same fatigues and dangers on their way back ; comforted by the idea that now they are cleansed from sin, and, at least for a considerable time, perfectly pure. I had once an old man pointed out to me, who had performed the pilgrimage many times, and was by this supposed to be so completely secure of paradise, and immaculate, that he might do what he liked and it would not be accounted sin in him.

What a fearful blindness this reveals to us ! and how such cases make one long for the coming of the Lord to drive away the clouds of error by the brightness of his appearing !

I was admiring the view, and thinking of these things, as I sat on a pier close to the sea, and, meantime, held a small parcel of texts, printed in Arabic, in my hand, so as to be ready if any chance of offering one should occur. There were several boatmen about, but not one

in a hundred knows how to read, even among the Arabs, and half of these were negroes, who scarcely ever have any education.

Presently, however, two men began walking up and down the pier, who were evidently pilgrims. Both from their features and dress I could see that they were not natives of the country; they had complexions almost as fair as an Englishman's, and more delicate-looking, being quite pale. The older of the two had a grey beard and a very pleasing countenance, with blue eyes; the other was of middle age and rather darker; he had also a pleasant face, and an air of great respectability. Both were clad in white woollen robes; such are always worn by Mecca pilgrims, whatever their rank or wealth. They looked rather curiously at the papers in my hand, and after taking a few turns one stopped and looked at it, on which I held it out to him, and they came up, and, making a courteous salutation, the younger man took the paper, and I asked if he could read (this not being an uncivil question in the East, where it is not rare to find persons of considerable wealth who, having risen from poverty when adults, have never learned to read).

“I can read,” he replied, and commenced reading the first text on the paper : “Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” His accent showed him not to be a native of Egypt, and as far as I could judge, he was from Aleppo, but certainly a Syrian Moslem.

“What is this?” he said, looking a little puzzled, and repeating the words over again.

“You see,” said I, “that it means the lowly and humble, who are said to be blessed. If we come in a proud spirit to God we cannot be accepted, can we?”

“No, truly,” said the older man, nodding.

“Well, if a poor man came to beg of you, and he said, ‘I am rich and well off,’ you would refuse him : but if he told you of his poverty, and entreated alms on that account, you would pity and help him.”

“Doubtless,” said both of them. “Yes ! yes ! that is quite true.”

“And so,” continued I, “is it with God and sinners. Do you not believe so?”

We conversed for some little time on this text. I took care to speak, not as one who was teaching, but as though I wished merely to see

if they agreed with me ; because, being pilgrims, they were likely to think they needed no sort of instruction, especially from a foreigner and a woman.

We came afterwards to the text on another paper,—“ This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

He read it, and then looked at me inquiringly, and I spoke a little of our sinfulness and need of a Saviour.

“ Ah, this was Seidna Eessa ” (our Lord Jesus), said one, using the ordinary Moslem title for Christ, which is the same they apply to many others, as they say, “ Our Lord Moses,” and “ Our Lord Mohammed,” etc.

I said, “ Yes ; ” and that this was the great reason of his coming into the world. “ Being, as you know,” I added, “ and as is said in your Koran, the Word of God, and not like others who, though great prophets, were only men ; but our Lord Jesus being the Word and Spirit, was able to save sinners by dying for them.”

The elder man looked rather curious, but not angry, as I said this ; and the other read over the text again, and then one or two more. “ From whence are these words ? ” he asked presently.

“From the gospel,” I said, “which is God’s word, as your Koran says.”

“And why are they printed on these papers?” he continued.

“Partly to serve as copies for scholars who, in writing, learn them,” I replied.

“And they are good indeed for the old as well as young,” added the old man; in which remark I cordially seconded him.

Several Arabs of the poorer class as well as a negro boatman had joined us by this time, and were listening and occasionally putting in a remark. At last the pilgrims thought it time to go, as the elder said, “Ibraheem! we must now go.” And the other then offered to return me the papers; but I begged him to keep them.

“We have our own book for the voyage,” said he.

“Well, keep these also; you may read them sometimes, and they are good words surely.”

“True,” said the old man; “keep them, keep them.” And his friend, thanking me very courteously, put the texts into his bosom, and they went away to prepare for their voyage, and I saw them no more.

Perhaps they may be persuaded by some

bigoted comrade to throw the precious words into the water. Perhaps they may keep them and read them again. Who can tell? God alone knoweth the secrets of every heart, and which seed shall fall by the wayside, and which among thorns and stones, and which shall bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. But many an earnest prayer went with these white-robed pilgrims, that the truth might enter their hearts, and make them flee from the bondage of sin and superstition; and that the Lord, the Spirit of truth, would accompany them over the green waters, and enlighten their dark souls.

If those little papers ever reach Mecca, they will, in all probability, be the first that ever were brought to that city. We know not, and, most likely, never shall know their fate, but we must hope and pray for the blessing. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days."



BEDOUIN WOMEN BARGAINING FOR HANDKERCHIEFS.



they wear ; but the eyes that peer above it also tell of a different race from the *Fellaha*. They are smaller, keen, and bright, but not so soft as the liquid black eye, which, when untouched by the blighting ophthalmia, is very lovely. Their *horn* of plaited hair also marks them out as Bedouins. They are bargaining for handkerchiefs, or something of the kind. The seller is calmly smoking, while they are chattering, and occasionally giving a brief reply to the torrent of words that issue from within the crimson veil. They are so busy as to be transferred in effigy to paper before they know what the foreigner, whom yet they have been eyeing askance all the while, was about.

Then a Bedouin chief rides up on his strong wiry steed (not exactly an Arab steed of the finest kind ; these are rarely, though occasionally, to be seen in Egypt, but a very serviceable and not ill-looking animal), his saddle furnished with cases for pistols, and his master wearing the long white robe and red leather peculiar to his people. As he disappears among the crowd, a girl, balancing two jars of sour milk with lumps of butter floating in it upon the palms of her upturned hands, next attracts one's attention,

it is so exactly the *pose* of some of the old statues seen in the museums.

One village market that we visited was held under a large grove of palms, which is just outside its clusters of mud-built dwellings. The beauty of the scene was indescribable; the flickering shade of that feathery foliage, and the bright sun of Egyptian February, gave a charm to the groups of villagers and shepherds accompanied by their flocks, that must be seen to be understood.

The older peasants, in large turbans of white or crimson, crouched in sunny spots, smoking and chatting over their bargains; and veiled women (their faces very rarely, however, hidden) flitted about, their dark-coloured dress relieved by their flashing silver bracelets and bright red coral necklaces, and golden coins or antique jewels like little fishes, hung in profusion round the necks of those who possessed some little wealth. The poorer ones were content with coloured glass or white shells.

The people are by nature very lively and talkative, full of little jokes, and also easily excited to quarrels, so that the scene was extremely animated. The cattle were not penned up, but, gentle as most cattle in Egypt are, walked

quietly about in the midst of the sellers of cotton, cloth, wool, tobacco, butter, salt curds, and such things; while, on little mats spread before them on the ground, other vendors disposed of cheap ornaments (such as are chiefly bought for children), besides handkerchiefs, sugar, coffee, and silk and thread for sewing. Some of the women, though roughened by exposure and field-work, were very fine-looking, and but few hid their faces in the shrouding "burko," or black face-veil universal in the towns.

The splendid air of the Nile triumphs over dirt and neglect so far, that those who survive infancy are usually strong and healthy, with graceful, well-knit figures, and robust, well-turned arms and legs. The habit of carrying their burdens on the head gives the women an upright carriage which is preserved quite into old age, and their walk is remarkably good. I never saw any people get over the ground so quickly with so little apparent exertion;* their rapid, gliding step carries them so briskly over ploughed fields

* The fashionable ladies who have adopted the French modern high-heeled boot might well envy the free and graceful step of the "Fellaha," so different from the unnatural and awkward mode of walking given by an appendage which distorts the foot from its proper shape.

or other rough land. The life in the open air doubtless produces this, for the town women are very inferior in height and strength generally to those in the country (as in all places). The difference is perhaps more striking in Egypt than elsewhere, the air of the Nile being in its bracing effects more like mountain air. I made a sketch of the palm-tree market, having found a seat on a fallen palm at a convenient distance. Here the passers-by soon came round in quite a circle to look and wonder. Several young lads who could read were glad to accept some printed Arabic texts, and a few women listened to some Gospel stories which I read to them. Meantime, Mr. Shakoor had as usual taken advantage of the market to let it be known that we had books with us, and many were taken by Copts, and a few by Mohammedans also. Though, for the sake of making them valued, we do not give them free (except texts and small tracts), the price is such as would be merely *nominal*—only that, where money is scarce, as it is in the country, a very trifling amount of coin is not parted with readily; and, unless the man really wishes for the book, he will not even lay down a farthing or a penny for it.

CHAPTER XVII.

VILLAGE MARKETS.

AMONG the country villages of Egypt it is customary to hold a sort of fair, or large market—in some places weekly, in others at longer intervals. These are frequented by peasants from all the neighbouring hamlets, and even from a considerable distance, as this is the only means by which the poorer classes in the country can procure anything in the way of clothing or the humblest luxuries, besides disposing of their own produce. Of course they are both amusing and characteristic, as fairs and markets usually are in every country, and afford many groups tempting to an artist's pencil—the difficulty being, however, that the people are so sharp in perceiving the object of even the most unobtrusive little pocket sketch-book, that the subjects are often warned off by their neighbours, or hasten to move away, the fear of the “evil eye” making

them usually unwilling to have any representation of themselves. Photographers in the city overcome this scruple by *paying* their subjects to lay it aside; but in the country, especially in a busy market, this would be almost an impossibility, so the traveller has to practise a rapidity almost equal to sleight-of-hand in order to secure some few of the groups that keep passing before his delighted eye. Here a woman, balancing at the same moment a heavy pitcher on her head, and a bundle of sugar-canes on her shoulder, pauses for a moment, jingling the gold pendants in her ears, while her teeth, white as milk, appear in a broad smile at the sight of a stranger.

“But what is she doing?” she exclaims.
“Writing in a book!”

“Ah, writing *you* in the book, Fatmeh!” cries a meddlesome neighbour; and the smile vanishes, and the sugar-canes are immediately lowered to the ground, their position changed as if on purpose to annoy the poor sketcher; and then she finishes the matter by diving into the thickest part of the crowd, and is lost to view.

Here are two Bedouin women from the desert, marked by the short face-veil of crimson which

In another village, much less picturesque than that under the grove, rather a curious incident took place while we were distributing books. The crowd was so thick that I had to seek refuge against a wall, from whence I could see all that went on. The Copts, who came from many distant villages where books were not to be had, were very eager to procure copies of the Testament and single Gospels, etc. To the very poor we gave some; but, as a rule, demanded (as before observed) a trifling price. Several Moslems came up and asked for books also; but one was angry on finding they were Gospels, and said, "If you brought *good* books we would take them, but we don't want such as those."

Mr. Shakoore told him it was a mistake to think these were not good, and that the Gospel was sent by God for every child of Adam, adding that if he read it as his Koran recommended (for the Gospel is recommended there as good to be read), he would find that he was wrong in saying these were not good books. The man, however, would scarcely hear him in patience, and snatched a small book of the Parables of Christ out of the hands of a young man who was reading in it very attentively, and who, I suppose,

was his relation, and angrily thrust it back into the Missionary's hand, saying, "There! take away your books!"

We quietly turned away, and were soon surrounded by a group of Coptic peasants from a distant hamlet, who flew upon the books with joyful eagerness. This is not to be wondered at, as they were taught from childhood to revere the very name of Gospel, though too often knowing nothing of its contents or teaching; but their neighbours were not aware that God's Word is for *all*, nor were they themselves, indeed, for some said, "Keep your books for *us*; the others have no right to them." And they were quite surprised on being assured that the good news of salvation through Jesus was free for whoever would receive it.

Some Copts came with us to the boat, and sat on the deck engaged in reading and conversation with Mr. Shakoor and his brothers for a long while. It was very cheering and pleasant to see these sturdy peasants, wrapped in their dark flowing mantles, crouched up in the sun (which in winter is courted even in Egypt), their sunburnt faces and jet-black eyes expressing their interest as they listened to the things which

concern the eternal welfare of man. But after a little while, we were surprised and pleased to see another man coming to join the circle, and he was no other than the very person who had been so angry, and taken the book away from the youth! Either second thoughts proved best in his mind, or he had heard some of his friends reading in our books, and the words of truth and holiness had pleaded for themselves in his heart. At all events, he changed his mind, came to the boat, and began conversing in a friendly manner; and, after some general talk, asked to look again at "that book." It is hardly necessary to say he was gratified, and spent some time in asking questions, and reading parts of the Gospel, and discussing it freely with all the circle—and he ended by taking away with him one of the very books he had at first so scornfully rejected! Surely this was the Lord's doing!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GREEK SLAVE.

THIS name calls to mind with many persons, no doubt, pictures and statues representing the ideal Greek slave, the fair girl bending to the earth in a despondent attitude—the subject having, from the time of the old Greek war of liberty, been a very favourite one with artists. It was indeed no ideal then; in sad reality hundreds of young creatures were dragged from their parents' homes—those homes stained with the blood of fathers and brothers—and doomed to spend their lives among strangers and foreigners, whose want of sympathy was in general as complete as though they had been merely sheep transported from one fold to another, instead of wronged and injured human beings. Now, however, the story is old, and the interest has naturally died away, and given place to more recent tragedies—of which there will ever be abundance so long as the

earth is full of the "dark places of cruelty," and the subjects of the Prince of Peace so few in comparison to the followers of wealth and power.

However, the individuals who suffered in the old Greek war are not all dead. It was my lot to fall in with a real living Greek slave; and perhaps the brief and imperfect account of her life which I gathered from a few words, and the way in which I happened to meet with her and tried to bring some comfort and truth before her mind, may not be without interest for English readers.

I must premise, however, that my Greek slave was neither young nor beautiful. Indeed, if the date of the War of Independence in Greece be recollected, it will be seen that any one taken captive somewhere about that period must be past youth, and probably past even middle age. In my mind, the idea of the long, long captivity only makes the story more touching still. But, without further preface, I will give the circumstances of our meeting, as noted down at the time in my journal.

During our annual excursion on the Nile, in the February of 1870, it chanced that my party were induced to visit a certain island of a very

unobtrusive description, upon which was a small village, or rather hamlet, commanding a very pretty view, though nothing in the way of antiquities or remarkable scenery was to be found in the whole neighbourhood; for which reason it was seldom, if ever, touched at by travellers. The inhabitants told us we were the only persons in a Nile dahabeeyeh who had ever come to their remote dwelling-place. We had been there the previous winter, but only for an hour, and had not entered any of the houses; but had given some printed texts to a few peasants and a Bedouin from the desert who could read a little. So on this occasion, having more leisure, we determined to try and find these persons, or some of them, again, if it should be possible.

On reaching the village, whose mud huts were situated in a group of palms about a quarter of a mile from the coast, we were accosted civilly by two or three turbaned peasants returning from their day's work in the tobacco-fields around; for the hour of sunset was now approaching. They spread a mat outside one of the huts, and begged us to rest there; and one, who recollected our former visit, hospitably proposed to go and make some coffee for us. We declined with many

acknowledgments, not wishing to trouble the poor people, or diminish their small store of coffee; and, while the gentlemen of the party were engaged in talking with the men, I said that I and the other lady would repair to the women's abode. These last were peeping at the door, and two of them had come out to salute us; but it would have been contrary to their custom to sit down in a circle with men, though the country people are so much less strict than those in towns, that I have frequently known them to do so, when the men present were neighbours and mostly relatives. They do not have a distinct apartment in these mud-huts, therefore going to the hareem was merely an expression denoting that we would sit with them in some place not at the time occupied by their lords!

We adjourned accordingly to a small court, first crossing a dark low-roofed passage between mud walls, and then a doorway without a door brought us into the feminine domain, full of litter, rubbish, and dirt, where ragged and nearly naked children were rolling about with fowls, dogs, and small black kids, and surrounded by four huts, this court being apparently common to the in-

habitants of all. These huts, like all of that class in Egypt, were destitute of windows, and merely roofed over with bundles of dry reeds or straw. In the walls of unbaked mud-brick were sundry curious-looking holes, or little dens, which seemed to be used, some as ovens, others as hencoops. All was as rude and primitive as possible, and as dirty and comfortless as primitive things very often are—not *always*; we speak with a reservation; but it is undoubtedly the exception when primitive abodes and ways of life are neat and comfortable. However, the poor women were friendly and cordial. The manners of the Egyptian peasants are not servile—unless in fear of some official superior, etc. On the contrary, they are sometimes very cool in their reception of foreigners; but oftener Oriental politeness makes them salute *even* a Frank kindly, and in this case they were very civil, and spread a clean mat over the dust in one corner for us to sit upon. A pretty young woman, wearing a gold nose-ring of inconvenient size—which did not much add to her beauty in our eyes—came and sat beside us, saying, “You are welcome!” in a cheerful, pleasant voice; and two or three others followed her example. Her husband, a young man, who

looked scarcely twenty years old, sat down at a little distance. He had followed us, and the women made no objection to his remaining. Probably all were his relatives.

He said that he recollected us, and our having given a paper to a Bedouin who could read ; and though he himself could not, he had heard the words, and "they were good." This gave a good opportunity for reading one or two Scripture texts, and talking a little about them.

Among our audience I observed an elderly woman, who at once struck me as very unlike the rest in appearance and manners. She was clad, like them, in the coarse dark-blue cotton robe and black muslin veil of Egyptian country-women, but was cleaner, and her humble dress was more neatly and decently arranged than theirs. Her manners were calm and dignified, and a settled sadness was on her face, which was fair in complexion. Though worn and wrinkled, her features wore traces of former beauty, and that of a different kind from the brown faces, with their almond-shaped black eyes, and the jetty hair cut short over their foreheads, which surrounded her, and one or two of which were pretty in their own way.

There was also an undefined *something* in her manner and voice that struck me as unusual—a degree of refinement, and a quiet, sad expression of countenance. She spoke Arabic just like the other people, but talked little, and listened with more attention than any of them; and when we arose to go back to the boat, as the sun was setting, she begged us earnestly to come again next day, and her sorrowful-looking face seemed to tell that its owner needed comfort for some peculiar reason. This was the “Greek Slave.”

While retracing our steps across the field towards the shore where our “sandal”—or little boat belonging to the dahabeeyeh—awaited us, I heard something of her history. It appeared that, while our companions were conversing with the men outside the huts, the young man had come from within; and one of his neighbours asked him whether his grandmother had seen the foreign ladies, and whether they could talk to her in her own language?

They wondered at this; and, on inquiry, learned that his grandmother had been brought long ago as a captive from Greece by a Turk, or an Arab in the Turkish service, a great man in that place, who had been engaged in the old

war. She had subsequently been given in marriage to a peasant on his property. It all took place so long ago, that no one was very clear about the details; but it was evident that the unfortunate woman had formerly been in a far higher position than that in which we found her, from the observations of some of the people about her "knowing how to behave to the strange ladies, because she was not like the rest, but had been used to good manners." And this agreed with what I had noticed.

Here was an outline bare enough indeed, yet one which imagination could but too well fill up. The poor captive had indeed a home and children—a daughter, at least, we were told of, whose son was the young man we saw, so that she was not utterly alone; but she had probably little power or influence with them. She dwelt among rude Egyptian peasants, whose faith was that of her captor; and what a contrast must that wretched hovel have presented to the abode of comfort, and perhaps luxury, in which her youth had been spent, and those ignorant dirty women to the mother and sisters from whom she had been snatched away by cruel and blood-stained hands!

I wondered if the little she must once have known of Christianity had been forgotten, or if she had been old enough to have retained some recollections of it—a Christianity far from pure, indeed, and mixed up with man's inventions, but still retaining something of the eternal truths of the Gospel; and I resolved to try if any spark could be aroused, and therefore visited the island again the following morning, on purpose to see the Greek slave. Only one of our party could accompany me, but we were warmly welcomed. The same young man was standing on the shore waiting for us, having, no doubt, descried the little boat putting off; and he brought the only man in the whole neighbourhood who could read. He had summoned him as soon as he saw us, and they proposed to Mr. Shakoor to go with them to a spot at a little distance, where a party of labourers were busy in the field. When they were gone, I hastened to the women's abode, and the old Greek came immediately forward, first handing to its mother a young infant she had been tenderly rocking, and, desiring her to wrap it up warmly, as the morning was still cold; she then saluted us, with calm sadness in her manner, yet with a smile that showed she was glad I had

come. Two others of the family, or neighbours, joined us, and I sat down in their midst, and produced the Testament; telling the young man, who had returned, and was now standing at the doorway, that this was the book whence those words were taken that he had heard last year. I then asked the old woman "if she had ever heard of the *Gospel*?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she answered, "formerly; but it is so long ago, I have forgotten it all."

"You are not of this country, I believe?" said I.

"No, I am from Crete. I was taken in the war, and brought here by a great man, who had property out yonder," pointing with her finger.

I asked if she had ever had any news of her family since? and, with a deep sadness in her tones, quite unlike the dull indifference with which she had spoken before, she said—

"Never! never! My father and mother—my brothers—I shall never see any of them any more! never! never!"

Of course, her parents must have been long dead in any case, as she could not have been less than sixty years old; but, for the moment, memory flew over the long years since that ter-

rible parting, and she really had the look and voice of an orphan as she murmured sorrowfully, "Never more ! never !"

It appeared she had been old enough to recollect her country, for, when I asked (pointing to a little girl about seven years old, who stood near us) if she had been as young as that when she was taken from Crete, she replied—

"No, no ! I was not little ; I was big !" And she shook her head sadly, as much as to say, "Old enough to feel everything !"

"It must have been a terrible sorrow !" said I. "But do you not know there is *One* who is even kinder than father and mother ? Do you know that God is our Father ? Did you ever hear the prayer that begins, 'Our Father, who art in heaven' ?"

How I wished I could have said the words in Greek ; for, though she spoke fluently in Arabic, and had perhaps partially forgotten her mother tongue, it would have struck home to the heart more readily.

"I know !" she said, however. "I used to hear it formerly, but I forget now—it is so long," she added, and sighed, and muttered something to herself which I could not hear distinctly

enough to understand; but I caught just the words, "Forgotten—all forgotten!"

They rang like a knell in the ears. I dared not question her much about her own history, having been warned that the people were suspicious, and would hinder me from talking to her if I showed too much curiosity. It was indeed evident, from her manner, and the low voice in which she answered, that, for some reason or other, she was under constraint, and did not venture to speak freely. However, it was more important for the poor woman to hear the way of salvation than to recount her own early sorrows. After repeating the Lord's Prayer, I said—

"Do you remember ever hearing the name of *Jesus*? In your youth did not you hear of Him?"

"Yes, yes, I did; but I forget it all now."

One of the neighbours, who had just come in and joined us, now said, in a spiteful way—

"Ah, she is become quite one of us, and says as we do now; she has forgotten her old ways—she was so young when she came."

The other looked half stupid, half frightened, but made no reply.

"No one," said I, "can save either your soul or hers but One, and that *One* is the Messiah,

our Lord Jesus, who died for us ; and, dear sister," I added, turning to the Greek, "if you have forgotten Him, He has not forgotten *you*—recollect that ; and He wants to save you."

She again sadly murmured, "Forgotten ! all forgotten !" But I opened the book, and said—

"Listen to God's Word, you and all the rest," and I read about the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," and explained it as well as I could. The young man came nearer, and was an intelligent listener, remarking sometimes, "Ah, that's true ! that's good !"

The old woman listened also attentively, and at last broke silence, saying—

"If we do good, will not God forgive us ?"

"He will indeed forgive us, but not for the things we do," I replied, "because they are imperfect. Only Jesus did good always, and without sin." And I went on to show how free is God's forgiveness ; not to be purchased by good works, which of necessity must follow pardon, but could not procure it ; and earnestly begged her to receive the gracious offer of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

“Ah, there’s much sorrow in life! much sorrow!” she said, sighing deeply.

“Then, only think what it will be to be for ever away from sorrow! Think of God’s love when He says such words as these.” And I read her the words in Revelation about “no more sorrow there.” But I warned her she could not enter there unless she put her trust in Jesus and his atoning death; and, turning to the Moslem women, told them the same thing, “Whoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely.”

The ignorance of women in Egypt is such, that, even in their own language, it is not easy to make them fully understand, unless the words are in the very commonest use; and, though the translation of the New Testament is in simple Arabic, they sometimes need words to be put into others commoner still, as we do in reading to very little children; and this is of course difficult for a foreigner and one not by any means a perfect scholar. Still, the very emergency seems sometimes to call up all one’s powers, and I seemed to be understood better than I could have expected, for I stayed a long time reading and talking.

The poor Greek repeated more than once,

“The love of God! Yes, that is better than anything!” and again murmured to herself.

I took her hand—the large white hand, so unlike the more taper-fingered though browner hands of the Egyptians—and said, in a low voice, “Will you not pray that God will give you his Holy Spirit, and forgive you and bless you for Jesus’ sake?”

“I do not know how to pray now; I have forgotten,” she whispered.

“But, dear friend, God does not forget you, as I told you before. He loves you! He sent me here on purpose to remind you of Him, and to tell you, and *all* of you, the good news of his love.” I turned to the others, adding, “If a rich man, with a bagful of gold and jewels, were to come and offer each of you some, you would gladly accept his offer. Yet you know in a short time you must leave these treasures. You could not take them with you when you die.”

“Truly,” said the Greek. “They all perish.”

She, poor thing, had probably seen all *her* earthly jewels fall into the hands of them “that break through and steal.”

“Well, the news I bring you, that God loves you, is better than gold.”

“God loves us!” she echoed.

“Yes, indeed, indeed He does! He calls you to believe in Him.” And I repeated again and again the messages of love, and exhorted her to pray, in the simplest words she liked, but only to *pray* that He would save her for Christ’s sake.

Her grandson seemed well-disposed, and applauded my advice about prayer. His young wife also seemed interested, and listened attentively. The old Greek evidently felt more than she dared to show. She was gratified by sympathy, but I think she felt more than that. There appeared to be a sort of awakening out of a long stupor. How far her mind and heart were fully aroused, and how far she was kept silent by fear of those around her, I could not tell, but the Lord knew; and I prayed earnestly for her in a few words before parting. There was an echo which “that sweet name,” so long unheard, had awakened from the memories of the past, and it may have enabled her to look up to Him who never *forgets*.

If it be so—if the hour spent in reading and telling of the Gospel message reached the depths of her soul, what a change for the “captive exile”! More than thirty years of slavery, with

such circumstances of misery and degradation, are a heavy burden indeed; but “if the *Son* shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed!” saith the Saviour to those bound by sin; and if this poor woman can cling to Him by simple faith, she will be free from the worst slavery, and shall soon be where the “fury of the oppressor” cannot reach. A few days or years more of earthly captivity, and then the mud hut exchanged for a brighter home than her beautiful Crete—even the *true* port of the “Fair Havens,” not the old harbour so called in St. Paul’s days, whose beauty was to pass away, but the Fair Haven of the heavenly land, where sorrow and storm cannot enter. Then the many tears that furrowed her cheek and dimmed her eyes will be forgotten, for the former things will have passed away

CHAPTER XIX.

SCATTERED SEED.

IT was a calm on the river—a dead calm—so that it was impossible to go up or down (the coast not being suitable for “tracking,” or dragging the boat by a long rope), and, therefore, we stopped for a while in a place where no village was situated, and where, for that reason, they rarely make a halt; for the crew have friends in most villages, and, if not, they like to purchase eatables, and to be in the midst of their kind, and dislike solitary moorings like this. But it was very lovely for those who could appreciate the scene, with its harmonious colouring—the purple distance with palm groves dotted about here and there, the glassy waters reflecting the gold and pink of the skies, and the flocks of wild geese careering through the air on their way to the sandbanks where they love to feed at dusk: all made a delightful prospect, and one especially soothing and

tranquil to gaze upon. Our immediate neighbourhood was nothing but a wide flat, partly cultivated in barseem (or Egyptian clover), and partly covered with stubble from last year's corn crops; the only foliage was a clump or two of gum arabic trees, in which the bees kept a joyous hum among their fragrant yellow blossoms; in the distance palm groves and villages appeared in plenty, but all around was solitary, except for a little cluster of reed huts or wigwams of the rudest description, with a few ragged tents appertaining to them,—the habitations of some Bedouin families, who led a partially nomade life, and who seemed to be very poor. We went to explore them, but at first none but little children were visible—wretched-looking creatures, whose few rags were undistinguishable from the dust in which they were grovelling; after a few minutes, however, the women of the troop who had gone to fetch water, began to return, with pitchers on their heads. One of them dived into the little den from whence a piteous wailing was heard, and quickly re-appeared with a tiny brown baby wrapped up in rags, and, after quieting it, turned round to see who her novel visitors could be, and gave a wondering but civil greeting. Two others

joined her and were really polite in their way : not one made the demand for backsheesh which so often worries European travellers. They did not live on a beaten track, and, probably, were unsophisticated, at any rate in that respect. After a little desultory conversation about their mode of life, etc., we were obliged to leave them, as there was only light enough to get back to the boat, but promised to come and visit them again next morning, as, being Sunday, we did not mean to move from the spot. Accordingly, we spent some time with them during the forenoon ; only the ladies could come, as the men of the Bedouin families were all absent at their employment of tending cattle. The women, about five or six in number, sat or crouched round us on the ground (a few were gone for water) ; a swarm of children made up the circle. In spite of their extreme want of cleanliness, they seemed healthy, the fine pure air in which they lived, and dabbling in the Nile whenever the weather was warm, making their condition very different from that of dirty town children. The poor women listened with more interest to the words of Scripture than many who appear their superiors in every respect ; one only lamented that there seemed so faint a

probability of their ever hearing anything of the kind again. One of the oldest, contrary to custom, was more interested than the rest ; in general, the aged women are specially hard and worldly, but this poor old creature really listened with eagerness, and tried to learn the short text, " God be merciful to me a sinner," which we endeavoured to teach her. When it was necessary, at length, to depart, her eyes were full of tears ; taking her wrinkled hand, I said that we would not forget her, but would pray the Lord to have mercy on her, and, to make her understand something of intercessory prayer, I told her how we would ask " that God would look on that old woman in the reed hut, and enlighten her mind, and bless her, for the sake of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus, about whom we had talked to her." The poor woman seemed quite overcome, and flung her arms round our necks—first one and then the other—saying, in broken words, " I love you ; you have told me good words. May God bless you."

It seemed really like the blessing on them that " bring good tidings, and that publish peace."

We returned to our boat, earnestly praying

that the Spirit might bless our feeble efforts, and keep alive the little flame kindled in this poor heart.

Our next halt was at a more populous place, a large village on the other side (*i.e.*, the eastern coast), which is for several reasons much less often chosen by the boats that ply on the river. It is less fertile, for one thing, and the crew find it less easy to obtain anything they want, and many of the villages are inhabited by settled Bedouins, who bear a bad character as respects honesty, so that it is thought less safe to anchor near them. This is, however, not always the case; the village here, which was situated at a short distance from the beach, was inhabited by genuine Egyptian peasants, and many of them seemed exceedingly well off, judging from the abundance of cattle, and the handsome ornaments worn by the women.

Though only built of mud, like other villages, the place had a very picturesque look, from the fine palm trees which grew between every three or four houses, and sometimes were built into the very walls. There were, also, some large gum-trees on a plot near the village, and a few acacias (or lebichs, as that species is here

called). Under the shade of these a carpet was spread by the sheikh of the village, who was friendly, and received Mr. Shakoor and his brother with great politeness. The chief men assembled with them, curious to know what these strangers could have to say, and looking with some interest, and perhaps a little suspicion also, on the book which was in their hands. They spent some time with these people, and found several not unwilling to listen while they read and conversed with them about the things that concern man's happiness, present and future. I did not stay among them, however, but went where I might hope to be of a little use—among the women, whom none but one of their own sex can reach in this country.

The sheikh directed me to his house, which was near, and of which he was very proud, for it actually boasted an upper story, though as yet unfinished. In one of the rooms, still roofless, I was received very courteously by his wife, and a carpet laid for me to sit on: a very rich one it was, of Persian or Damascus manufacture, and presently all the relations of the family, and, doubtless, many neighbours also, crowded round to see the visitor, for they told me that no "Frank



AN EGYPTIAN SHEPHERD BY THE NILE.

woman" had ever before come to their village. I was overwhelmed with questions, of course. "What do you wear this for? What stuff is your dress made of? Why have you no earrings like us? I see you have none of this" (and the speaker put her finger on the blue marks tatooed on her chin, according to a practice very common in the country parts of Egypt); "do not people like this in your country?" But, though curious, they were not rude, and the fingers which handled my dress were withdrawn whenever they perceived that I saw them. All these women were alike clad in loose robes of dark blue cotton, so dark as to be almost black, and some wore veils of thin black muslin, through which the crimson silk tassels that hung down their backs from the headdress were visible, and had a very pretty effect. The want of any other lively colours in their garments was, in a great measure, atoned for by the scarlet coral beads and massive silver bracelets and chains worn by most. The sheikh's wife—a woman still young, and with handsome features and a very graceful figure, wore bracelets of pure gold and earrings likewise. She showed her children with more pride than an Egyptian mother often dares to show, for usually they are

too much afraid of the “evil eye,” or envious wish (for that is really what it signifies), to venture to show their little ones to strangers with any *appearance* of joy and pride, however strongly they *feel*. This woman seemed not to fear anything, but boldly pointed out her two very fine little boys, and then sent a slave (for she possessed a black slave woman) to fetch her baby girl, which she evidently thought a great deal of. The little creature was, indeed, so singularly beautiful that a mother’s openly delighting in her would not excite surprise in our country. No adornments in the way of dress set off the infant charmer—no embroidered frock or blue kid shoes—but nothing could have improved her; she stood in her sole garment, a little shirt of white calico (which was *clean*, however), a perfect picture, with her rounded limbs displayed to full advantage, and a slight rosy colour showing through her dark clear skin—for an Egyptian she was uncommonly fair indeed, and as smooth as ivory, and with eyes that might well be compared to the gazelle’s, so soft and bright, and with such a tender expression.

I took care to admire the little Zeynab (so I found she was called) in a discreet manner, and

though far from sympathizing in the ridiculous superstition of the evil eye, I cannot help liking the expressions which are commonly used in the East, either by a friend or stranger, whenever parents show their little ones. "May God keep him for you!" "The Lord preserve him to you!" "Praise God! may God let him grow and bless him!" etc.

The constant acknowledgment of our dependence on the Almighty, even if only outward, has a good effect, and with *some* I think it is more, and that they really have a sense of what they say; but, unhappily, redeeming love is unknown to them, and submission to God's power is not enough unless we can also look up to Him as our Father, through Jesus Christ. Yet, in some points, those who have so much more light might take an example from them.

When the infant Zeynab had been admired and commended to Heavenly protection, then I sought for an opportunity of reading to them from some simple texts I had brought with me, the gift of an orange (rather a scarcity in this neighbourhood) having secured the child's tranquillity. They were not ill-disposed to listen, but the negress slave, who sat just behind me with her

black baby in her lap, was very officious and conceited in giving, as she imagined, her aid ; and while I was telling them the story of Adam and Eve, she interposed, assuring me she knew it perfectly, and began giving a distorted account full of absurd legends. Without abruptly checking her, which would have probably affronted them all, as she was considered an authority, I managed, with a little patience, to relate the history in my own way, and tried to show from it the need of a Saviour for all Adam's children. " Ah ! " exclaimed the negress, " the Lord *Eesa* (Jesus) ; he in whom the *Nasara* believe," looking contemptuously towards the circle of women. " Do you think the Lord Jesus only cares for the *Nasara* ? " said I ; with them, it must be recollected, *Nasara* meant *Copt*, as they knew nothing of any other Christians. " Only ! " replied the slave very decidedly. " Not at all," I said ; " you are quite mistaken. Our Lord said, ' Come unto Me all that labour and are heavy laden.' Are there none heavy laden among you ? " They were silent, but one or two looked surprised and touched. It was a new idea. I went on to show them the largeness of Christ's love, and the fulness of His sacrifice, as well as I could in so brief a time and

under the circumstances. They listened with increasing interest, and when I was obliged to go because it was almost dark, they held me, and nearly forced me to remain. One said, "The darkness will not matter, for there is now a moon." "Stay with us," said another, "the cattle will be home presently, and you shall sup with us; we can give you new milk." With real regret I was obliged to refuse their kind invitations, for a boatman had been sent to bring me to the dahabeeyeh—the lateness of the hour and my long delay had made my party anxious—and I could not linger, and bidding adieu to my friends, with many good wishes on both sides, we parted.



HUTS IN THE COUNTRY.

CHAPTER XX.

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT INFANT SCHOOLS IN THE EAST.

AN infant school in England or Germany is something between a school-room and a nursery, as every one conversant with those most valuable institutions is well aware. The little creatures who would be otherwise playing in a dirty lane and learning evil with their earliest impressions, are under kind care, learning a little (a *very* little it ought to be of regular book-learning, under seven years old), and are well amused, and receiving healthful and cheerful impressions during the remainder of the time spent in school. Pictures, little songs, marching and trotting about the room in order, and many other devices keep them happy and occupied without fatigue. But in the East (at all events in Egypt) we have great difficulties to contend with in the management of infant classes of children, and as yet I do not feel that we have hit upon what is exactly suitable,

though to collect the little ones and keep them out of mischief and learning *some* good is a great point. When I first assembled a school of girls, I divided the little from the older ones, and, not having then a second room, I endeavoured to keep them at different ends, and as soon as an older girl was able to read passably, made her a sort of monitress, to teach the alphabet to the young children. So far it did very well, but I attempted to introduce our European system of infant-school teaching, and then there arose a totally new set of difficulties. The prime hindrance was about *pictures*; the children liked them, and learned the simplest Scripture stories as readily as their little sisters with the flaxen hair and blue eyes could do, but the parents of Mohammedan children objected: some removed their girls, and many others, who did not send them at first, sent them when the pictures were taken away. We cannot wonder at this: their neighbours the Oriental Christians, whether Copts, Greeks, or Latins, all pay undue reverence to pictures, and so constantly break the second commandment by “bowing down” to pictures of saints and angels, that we can scarcely blame the Moslem creed for its severity in respect of even *making* a “likeness of anything that is

in heaven above or the earth beneath." Then the Coptic children were inclined to worship the pictures, and, as they knew no difference, it was quite ludicrous to see one devoutly kissing a coloured print representing *Cain* after slaying Abel! Of course they were not permitted to do so while in school, nor to show any external marks of reverence to saint or angel any more than to Cain, but the habit already existing made the Scripture pictures as unfit to be used in teaching on *their* account as on that of the other scholars. So they were all banished; but the teaching without the aid of the eye, with very young children, is far more difficult, especially when the teachers are young and inexperienced, and have no idea of making instruction entertaining when unassisted by externals. Then as to the little exercises—in summer it is hardly needful to say they would be out of the question in a hot country, but in the two or three cold months, and about two temperate ones, I thought they would be very useful, as the thinly-clad, bare-footed children, who composed the larger part of the scholars, seemed to feel the cold a good deal. A little marching, with counting, etc., was, therefore, tried, but in a week it had to be abandoned: the mothers said,

“We send our children to *learn*, and you teach them to *play*! If that is what they are to go to school for they may as well be at home.” It was in vain to try and explain to them that walking about for a quarter of an hour did not interfere with the use of the alphabet and needle the rest of the time; it was unsuited to the ways of the country, and where so many prejudices were absolutely necessary to be overcome or contended against (such as the prejudice against clean faces and sundry others), it was not worth while making “a fuss” about a trifling matter.

Then for the amusing songs—where were they to be found? A foreigner could not write such things with any chance of success, unless brought up in the country from an early age, and dwelling always among the people, so as to have all their idioms at full command; and no native poet had yet condescended to write verses suitable to very young children. Translations, indeed, exist of many of our simple hymns, having been printed at Beyrout, under the superintendence of the American Mission, and some of the shortest and easiest of these can be used in an infant school. But as for amusing songs, they are as yet not to be found, and those occupied in education are so

busy with the most essential things that they have not time (till teachers shall be more plentiful) to turn their attention to comparatively trifling points.

It must be confessed that an infant school without either lively infantine songs, or pictures, or exercises for the little feet and hands, is rather a hard matter to conduct ; and I can hardly wonder that sometimes a little ragged child, used to the freedom of the streets or lanes, deserts the ranks, and returns to the enjoyment of dust pies and broken crockery. If the young assistants who have the daily charge of these little ones were fully “up to the mark” themselves, a good deal more might be done in the way of keeping the smaller classes both happy and occupied, but it is very difficult to make them see that anything of *indirect* instruction—anything, in fact, except actual learning by rote, can be worth taking trouble about. And yet they could—if they understood the value of opening a child’s faculties gently and gradually, without wearying it—do this far better than any foreigner ; for, the younger a child is, the more idiomatic its language.

The attempt to introduce object-lessons, also,

did not quite answer expectations. The teachers complained that it took up time wanted for improvement in reading with older children, and with infants it seemed impossible to get up their interest sufficiently to extract any answers except repetition. I had the Scripture lessons to give, and was not able, therefore, regularly to teach the tiny ones, and had to give them in charge to a pupil-teacher; and she, having no conception of the *utility* of object-lessons, could not teach in such a way as to do the least good. For example, after a private training on the subject, she assembled a young class in obedience to orders, but half-laughing and half-ashamed all the while; and, holding up a piece of stone and another of sugar, began asking questions as to their resemblances and differences; but between every reply, whether right or wrong, giving a half-contemptuous smile, and, after eliciting four or five adjectives, eagerly dismissed them, saying, "That is enough. Now, go and study your *lessons*." Adding to me afterwards, in a pretty loud whisper, "What is the good of teaching them that stones are hard and sugar sweet? Every one knows that, and it only wastes their time. If they do not sew in the afternoons, no

mother will send her girls; and the mornings are not too long now for the reading, alphabets, and Scripture."

There was such truth in the last two remarks, that I thought it wisest to act on them, and not discuss the first. Of course, a person of education knows that the object-lessons *are* of use in giving habits of observation on common things, and accuracy of language. But a compromise has been agreed upon finally; certain written lessons in the simplest style being prepared, from which the pupil-teacher can get the assistance necessary with her limited knowledge; and though not equal to good extempore teaching, it is better than none; and when we are able we give the infants a lesson, and infuse more life and spirit.

I do not find the pupil-teachers by any means deficient in intelligence or docility, but they are slower and more languid in the way of imparting knowledge than Syrian girls, who have very frequently all the energy of the Anglo-Saxon in their manner, and in their active way of setting about their business. The French expression, "*trainer*," exactly expresses the style in which a Coptic girl naturally gets through the order of

the day—a *little* behind-hand with everything, a constant need of being stirred up and kept alive. Yet I do not mean by this that they are sleepy or dull—far otherwise. They are full of spirits, and fond of fun. The demure look which visitors often notice in looking into the school-room is merely a piece of good manners towards strangers, and not the characteristic demeanour of Egyptian girls. But the dislike to *trouble*, which all young people have more or less, is certainly found more universally here, and the difficulty of inducing either a servant, or a school-teacher, or an artisan, to take even a very little trouble, unless fully convinced it is “worth while,” is one of our hindrances in the way of improvement; since there is not always time to explain one’s reasons, nor, indeed, is it desirable as a point of discipline that a superintendent, or master or mistress, should give a reason to the subordinates when the order ought to be sufficient. A servant in Egypt will not unfrequently say to his lady—

“What do you want another plate for? Why must I fetch another spoon? There are six on the table, and you are only six persons.”

“But I must have another, and my asking is enough,” you reply.

“Well, as your honour pleases” (with a shrug of the shoulders), and he goes downstairs, leaving you with a feeling that you must have been unreasonable somehow. If, however, it had chanced that he spied an expected guest coming in, he would have run cheerfully to fetch the extra plate, etc.; but to bring seven when the party was only six—this was *needless* trouble in his ideas; and so with fifty little items of daily life. And thus with the school-teacher; she will not grudge trouble, if a good girl in the main, where she can see the necessity strongly; but will “shirk” if she considers it a mere fancy.

For the older girls I find nothing better for opening the mind, and mingling some amusement with instruction, than oral geography lessons, combined with descriptions and occasional anecdotes; but for those under seven years old, something easier and more childish is wanted. Comparing various well-known animals, or giving the uses of certain domestic articles and their preparation in a lively yet simple way, is the kind of *entertaining* lesson which I have found to answer best with such; but they require to be given by an educated person, and one who has *seen* the sort of lesson, or else by one possessing

by nature considerable tact and powers of managing young children.

In the East the combination of instruction with entertainment is so totally new an idea in teaching children that it can only be introduced by degrees and with discretion.

The parents are, as might be expected, even more unreasonable in their demands than parents in England, and (as a general rule) that is saying a good deal. They often express wonder that a little creature of four years old who has been sent (irregularly perhaps) for a few months "is not able to read *yet!*" This is only in the case of a mother who cares a little about it; some only send them to learn to sew, and *their* complaint is that a young child is not dexteroas enough with her needle after a short attendance.

Of course we do not yield to these foolish demands, and overwork the tender brains or fingers of little children to please ignorant parents, who unable either to read or work, have no notion of the time it requires to learn; but foreigners labouring in countries like Egypt must be very careful not to bring in more difficulties than already exist in the path, and must avoid hurting the prejudices of the people as much as is compatible

with the real benefit of the pupils. It must be indeed "here a little and there a little, as they can bear it."

To give an instance of some of the obstacles which we meet with : a little girl who had been in the school ever since she could speak plain, and who though only about seven years apparently (for the mothers keep no count of their children's age, so it is only guess), could read fluently in the Gospel, and was able to sew very prettily for a child, was suddenly removed one day ; and on the teacher sending another scholar to the house, a rude message was returned that she was not coming any more. The teacher thought it hopeless, for she said the neighbours told her the girl was sent to a native work-teacher. Now, these work-teachers, poor things ! are great enemies of *proper* school-teachers. They are generally women of the poorest and most ignorant class, who earn their living by sewing in coarse style the garments of the common people, for many of the peasant women are so ignorant that they cannot hold a needle. These work-women assemble about eight or ten little girls, more or less, and at first the parents pay them a trifle for teaching them ; then when they can do the rough, coarse kind of work,

which is all attempted by that class usually, they are of sufficient use to be not only not paid for, but very welcome assistants. They do not learn to work well, and of course learn plenty of gossip and bad talk, besides that their health is injured by sitting all day in a small, close, dirty room, damp in winter from the clay floor, and suffocating in summer. There is nothing one of these *so-called* work-teachers likes better than to pounce upon a scholar of mine who already knows how to work as well or better than themselves, and to represent to the mother that she has been ill-taught, and cannot work at all, and either coaxing or frightening the child into full acquiescence; for an Egyptian child is almost invariably timid by nature, and easily cowed into silence. It happened thus, in the case I allude to, the little girl was waylaid when returning from school; a needle was thrust into her hand, she was dragged into her mother's presence, and of course was stupid and terrified, and stood with the needle and thread and a piece of work in her hand as if incapable of performing a single stitch. "There! I told you they taught her nothing, and that the school was good for nothing. Now you see!" exclaims the teacher, and the scholar was re-

moved accordingly. I heard the story in detail on the visit which I immediately paid in order to learn the truth. The woman received me uncivilly enough ; scarcely paid the customary compliments, rarely omitted, unless from intentional rudeness, in the East ; and did not ask me to sit down. She was busy washing in a damp court, common to her and three other families. I found a broken *kafass* (or palm-wood cage, such as are used for various purposes here), and took my seat unasked, for this mother was a former acquaintance, and I felt I had some right to stay ; in a very severe fever, in which the child had been near death, I had visited her many times, and under God, had been permitted to be the means of saving her life apparently. So I tried all that gentle remonstrance could do, and showed the mother that it was impossible to judge of a child's progress in anything in such a way as she described. "Your school is not good for anything!" she sullenly replied ; "how long is my girl there, and can't yet sew !"

"Dear friend, you are hasty ; only come and see her at the school or give her work quietly at your own home, and you will find this woman told you lies for her own purposes."

“I don’t mean her ever to go to you any more,” she answered in a dogged tone. I was nearly beaten ; in most cases I would have gone away in fact, but the little one had so nearly died, and with such care and trouble been raised up from her sick-bed the year before, and she was just beginning to know a *little* of the meaning of what she read in school of the love of God—could I yield her up to the charge of a deceitful, bad woman, and all the ignorance and dirt and degradation from which we had been trying to raise her so long? And she had been a favourite pupil of my poor Fatmeh, who had spared no pains with her. These thoughts passing quickly through my mind, made me resolve on a last effort, and I was encouraged by seeing the father’s head at the window. He was rarely at home in the day, and as he was superior in sense to his wife, I felt it a providential occurrence. So I began talking to him, reminding him that it was not to get a few piastres that we taught the children like that poor woman, but to do them good, and that above all we wanted them to love God and be *His* children, and taught them to read with that view ; that we spared no trouble in teaching other things also, and brought materials

from a distance on purpose, and "besides," I added, "we love the children. When your little one was sick, who came to her and brought medicine?" "It was you!" he answered quite touched, as the recollection came into his mind. "Yes, yes; you brought her medicine and fruit; everything! truly she is yours more than ours; she was in the school from the time she could speak, and belongs to you!" Encouraged by the father's approval, I again tried the woman, and after a little she said, "The truth is with you. I will take her from that woman, and she shall be yours again." The child had slipped in during the conversation, and glanced timidly yet half-smiling at me. The father nodded out of the window in a friendly manner, and assured me she should come as before when her dress was washed. I almost feared it was a pretext to get rid of me civilly, but on the following day the little girl was in her place again, and attended just as before. Her father is a Moslem of the artizan class, and not without intelligence; the mother, as may be guessed, very stupid and of a disagreeable temper. However, this time success crowned the efforts, and the trouble is nothing in such cases; but often, alas! the work-woman has

gained the victory, and then one feels disappointed. However, there are hundreds of little disappointments to every one engaged in working among the poor and ignorant, and I only give an instance to illustrate the *kind* of hindrances met with, among younger children especially; the older girls are chiefly taken with a view to being married, or from the fancy that they are too old; it is little ones who are oftener caught by the work-teachers.

The subject of punishment and reward has also its own peculiar set of difficulties in Egypt, particularly with the girls. "You must tell the teachers never to beat my child," said several mothers to me formerly, when the work was in its early days. I agreed, having a dislike to personal chastisement, when it could be avoided; so the teacher was told to make the refractory young ones stand facing the wall for a certain time as a punishment for disobedience, tearing books, etc. Presently a Moslem woman paid me a visit to expostulate on this. She was very indignant, but I was puzzled to make out her very fluent talk, and called for the teacher to assist by speaking more slowly. "What is it that displeases her so much about her child?" "Oh," she says,

“you made her stand with her face to the wall, and that she will see her own shadow and become crazy, if she does so.” The woman vehemently exhorted us on no account to punish her in so dangerous a manner, or she must remove her. I found that several had this ridiculous superstition, and therefore, though only laughing at the woman in a good-humoured way, the teacher privately told me that it would be wiser to make the delinquent kneel in the middle of the room, or on occasion administer a pat with the ruler on the hand. As to the rewards, they were harder than the punishments, for a long time; and even now, the younger part of the children cannot be induced to believe that a reward means anything but a favour given to one because you like her best, or out of mere caprice. I had once promised some pairs of scissors to each of the children in a certain class who should by such a time be able to read; when the day came all claimed them. “But only so-and-so is deserving; the rest of you are still in the spelling-book.” “Yes,” they answered; “but do give us the scissors also. Why not give them to us?” Again and again it was explained; they retired looking rather sulky, and two did not appear next day,

and sent messages by companions full of indignation from their mothers. I believe both returned in time, but the feeling that unjust partiality had been shown was not easily driven out. By little and little this will be overcome, however, and is already modified among all old comers. But the actual *infant* school work is still rather a problem. Fortunately, recess—a complete *rest* from study between morning and afternoon school—is fully understood and appreciated; our Egyptian friends make no difficulty about that; and when in their new school-house and with a playground to enjoy it in, I expect their recess will be a most healthful and pleasant hour for them. It is a pity the little brothers and sisters cannot be together in infancy as in our infant schools, but the customs of the country make it necessary to have two separate infant schools—one for boys, one for girls—each are to have a little plot of ground in which to play, and I shall endeavour to have a few trees, and even some creepers, and let them learn something about plants, etc. Meantime, though working under difficulties, we have reason to be thankful that so many come to us at so early an age, and when they have learned so little of the evil around them.

Some friends wonder that as educated women teachers are scarcely possible to find in Egypt, and our young pupil-teachers are apt to marry and leave us just when trained up sufficiently to begin to be of real use, it has not seemed wise to bring over English teachers; and some have gone so far as to suppose than an Englishwoman, even if only accustomed to give instruction in accomplishments, or even if she had never taught anything to anybody, *must*, as an educated person, be a far more valuable help than a young Egyptian maiden. But though these last have many disadvantages—such as ignorant and superstitious relations, want of energy of temperament, etc.—still the disadvantage of want of *language* is a greater one still in a school assistant; and as Arabic is not a tongue easy of acquirement, a person of even greater quickness than the average would be a dead weight on the Mission for a considerable time. Moreover, with a foreigner, there is always the risk of her disliking the country and employment, or finding the climate disagree, and then she must be sent back at a great expense; whereas, the native girl, if unhappy in her place, or unsuited to it, is in the midst of her friends, and has only to walk

into the next street to be at home. But hitherto our *pupil*-teachers—those either partly or entirely trained in the school—have never left except from death or marriage, but have been happy and improved year by year. They are not first-rate as instructors it is true, but under careful superintendence answer far better than strangers would do, as being accustomed to the ways of the people, and also brought up in the school. Of course I am only speaking of *assistants*: in the *present* state of education in Egypt it would be impossible to find a woman fit to undertake the superintending and directing of a school with any chance of success; but I never forget an expression used by one who highly valued foreign missions and schools, and whose blessing was given to this in its commencement, shortly before he was called to “go up higher”—“A foreign missionary’s *aim* should be to make himself useless;” meaning by training up those of the country to do what, when duly instructed (and yet more taught by the Spirit), they could then, *as natives* of the place, do far better than others.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ORPHANS.

“WHY do you not take orphan children to educate?” we are frequently asked, and particularly by friends from India, where benevolent Europeans have established so many orphan schools. “You would have the children,” they say, “more entirely under your care, and not undergo so much labour in vain as in the case of day scholars, who are so often removed by parents just as they are making progress.” I reply to this question that had we funds for such an increased expenditure, which at present is not the case, a difficulty still greater would present itself, namely, that there are apparently no orphans in Cairo or its neighbourhood! We are told sometimes that such and such a scholar is an orphan, but on inquiry it always turns out that she is only *fatherless*, and the mother being a widow, is poor, and wants a new frock for the child on the

plea that she has no father to work for her. But what then becomes of those who have lost both parents, while still so young as to be unable to get employment? The answer is simple enough, and does credit to the kind feeling of the Egyptians—they are adopted by childless persons!

If a child is left desolate by the death of both parents, or is left exposed by cruelty in infancy (though this is not a *very* frequent case, I believe), the little *stray* is at once adopted by some person who has no children, or whose children are dead. In the case of near relatives, of course, this is quite natural everywhere, though it appears to be done much more fully than is very often the way in Europe. We never hear of a child treated as a “poor relation,” or put in the secondary place on all occasions when living with a wealthy relative; on the contrary, the uncle or cousin, like Mordecai, bring up the orphan of their family exactly like their own, and with equal advantages if they have children, and in their *place* if not. But in many instances, when there is no near relative, or when they are very poor, a total stranger steps in and takes the orphan; a childless widow, or one whose own have died, accepts with gratitude the poor lamb without a fold, and

clasps it to her motherly heart. When brought to a new home, the little stranger is immediately made a child of the house, and is reared in every respect as if belonging to them; he is not kept at a distance, but is brought up to know the comfort of a mother's arms or a father's knees, and in his turn cheers and consoles their old age.

It is a very different thing from what is sometimes spoken of in Europe as adoption, that is, when a kind-hearted, wealthy person pays for the education of a poor child, either in his own country or abroad, and I have even heard of the name of *mother* being given to such a friend—very unsuitably, for though a most valuable friend she is not in any sense in the position of a parent. Whether from the caution of the Anglo-Saxon race, or for other reasons, it is certainly very rare to find even one among the hundreds of poor orphans of various classes and conditions in England who is *really* adopted by a childless person, taken into the heart and home as a son or daughter, and yet there are probably far more lonely households in England than here. One cause, no doubt, is, that the love of children is so much more universal in the East—everybody likes them, with scarcely an exception—whereas,

in England it is not uncommon to meet with those who rather look on the young as a necessary evil. Then there is a much greater dread of responsibility ; this is a very reasonable objection, and one which the uneducated could, of course, feel much less. Still we are perhaps apt to forget that children are *always* a responsibility in every case ; and the Egyptian would say, if asked “ Why do you venture to undertake a charge that God did not lay on you ? ” “ Oh, but He *did* lay it on me ; God sent me this boy (or girl) by putting him in my way and leaving him an orphan, and me childless.” And there is a good deal to be said in favour of this simple way of acting ; certainly it saves much sorrow and gives much pleasure. The adopting parent always brings up the orphan or foundling exactly as he would have done his own son : so if the stray has been taken by a poor man or a poor widow, he runs about in a ragged blue shirt or little striped bournous, and as soon as he has strength to drive cattle or trot to the field, follows his father and helps him in his work, or if in a town, handles the tools of the artisan ; and, if a girl, she carries water in a little pitcher on her head almost as soon as she can walk alone, and is content with a piece of thin

calico as a veil, and a necklace of glass beads, and a single garment (which might be called frock or shirt with equal propriety), until she is thought old enough to be married to a neighbour's son, and promoted to a mud hut of her own. It may have chanced that the parents of the orphan were better off than those who adopted the child, but there is no very marked distinction of classes in the East (until we come to really wealthy people, who are sure to have relatives to look after their children), and there is no *caste* feeling to complicate matters. If, on the other hand, the child is quite poor and is taken by a rich person, he is brought up not as a humble dependent, but, as I said before, as his son, sent to the best school that his father knows of, and dressed as well as his means allow, and established in life according to circumstances. It does not seem that adopted children are looked on by the relations of the parties who have taken them as interlopers; it is so common a practice with childless persons, that no ill-will, as far as I can learn, is excited by it. The cousins or brothers are no worse off than if there had been a son or daughter born in the house; and the clothes, and jewels, and money spent on education, etc., does not therefore appear

in general to be grudged because the young possessor is not actually of their blood.

The adopted father can provide as he will for the child during his lifetime, or settle him in business as he likes; the usual way seems to be to bring him up to his own trade or occupation. A boy was not long since brought to the school by a respectable man, who in private told us that the child was not really his own, but that being childless he and his wife had taken him as an infant. He did not wish the little fellow to know it while still young, as he called them parents, and had no idea they were not such in blood. There are probably others among the number that we are not aware of.

Some time ago we had a child at the school who was a foundling, partly of negro origin, who had been deserted, and was taken by a poor woman serving in the baths as what they call a "bellana," whose office is to wash and plait the women's hair, etc.; but for the marked difference of feature I should never have guessed that she was not the woman's own daughter, and on remarking this one day, she told me that she had none of her own, they having died in infancy, "and so I took this one who was deserted," she added, as if it was quite a matter of course. She

acted as she would with her own, by removing the girl from school at an early age, in order to let her acquire expertness in her profession ; but it was from a mistaken idea that it was for her good, and that reading was a very useless concern, not from any want of kindness to *her*.

It is now many years since I was at one of the most splendid wedding festivals that ever I saw ; in fact, it made one think of the Arabian Nights, such was the splendour and the lavish display of wealth on the occasion. A lady of the Viceregal house was making a marriage festival at the union of her adopted daughter with a wealthy Pasha, and had the young lady been her own child it would have been impossible to do more for her. All the Moslem ladies of the great hareems were present with swarms of slaves, both white and black, looking like beds of tulips in their gorgeously tinted silks, and actually sparkling with jewels. No expense was spared to render the feast magnificent, and it was thought a great favour to the few European ladies who were admitted to be allowed to partake in the display. Music, dancers, lights, silver, and gold, and incense seemed to abound in every apartment, and the bride was literally

weighed down with her ornaments. I do not mean to say that I admire this style of showing regard, but it was the custom of the country for a lady in that high position, when her daughter was married, and I mention it therefore to show that in Egypt the idea of adoption is fully and entirely carried out in making the child follow the fortunes of the parents, whether high or low, rich or poor, and they seem to receive as much love and duty as from their own offspring in return for their care. If spoilt and ill brought up they give trouble, and turn out ill sometimes, but so may their own : and it does not seem, as a general rule, that the plan of the childless giving a home and mother to the homeless and motherless, is other than a mutual blessing, and surely in this point our Eastern brethren show a simple faith worthy of imitation ; and if the orphans were adopted by those who meant to bring them up for the Lord, it would be a double blessing.

A widow lady (an Oriental Christian) who lives near us, has brought up the child of a young woman, who acts as housekeeper to her, and has been in her family from childhood herself, but is a Mohammedan. The little girl has been as a grandchild to the widow ever since her birth,

and has been sent to my school from the time she was old enough to learn her letters. This child reads every night in the Gospel to the lady, seated beside her, and she told me a little while ago that it was her greatest wish to have her dear girl know God's Word well. Her own mind appears to have been drawn to serious views more and more since she has been watching over the education of this young object of her care and affection.

Another case, which was very touching, I met with one day when visiting in a lane where some of our scholars lived. They told me there was a young person very ill of consumption (a most rare disease here) who wanted to know if I could do her any good, as she heard I had brought medicines to one of their neighbours. I went up the mud steps and found the invalid in a poor and comfortless room enough, opening on a roof covered with litter as usual, but her dress, etc., showed she was not in actual poverty. She was an interesting girl of about sixteen apparently, and had been nearly two years married, as I was informed. She seemed very ill, and when a middle-aged woman who sat near her asked if she would recover, I felt so doubtful, that I

could not but hesitate before replying at all. The girl (for she was really but a girl in appearance still) saw my face and read in it what I felt, and began to cry. Poor young thing! what hope had she to smooth the passage to an early grave? The woman then bent tenderly over her, patting her as is their way, to comfort her, saying all manner of tender expressions and trying to cheer her, "No, no, my eyes—my beloved—my heart you will get better! God is great; don't cry—don't be sorry!" The rough-looking, hard-featured, dirty woman seemed quite pleasing from her affection. She turned to me presently and said, "I have brought her up, and I love her very much; tell me what to do for her or to get, and I will bring it." I said she ought to have very nourishing food, and offered to send her something if they had any difficulty in procuring what she needed. (The fact was that dirt and discomfort gave an air of much greater poverty than really existed, and I thought they could not afford meat, etc.) The woman raised her head, and replied energetically, for an Egyptian *can* be energetic when her feelings are excited. "If it was at the other end of Cairo I would go to fetch meat for her, and we can get whatever she

likes—milk, fruit, meat—if only it can do her good, no expense signifies, and it is no trouble if it is for *her*.” She then explained to me that she had brought this girl, when quite young, from a place in the south of Egypt, on the river (she did not tell me what circumstances induced her to take her, or the parents—who were yet alive, to give her into her charge, but certainly she had been a mother to her in affection). “Having brought her up from a little child, I love her like my own,” she said ; “indeed I have none of my own. When she was old enough I married her to a young brother of mine—much younger than myself—and we all love her, she is so gentle and good.” After some time spent in hearing symptoms, I begged them not to give her any medicines, but to send her to the warmer climate, where she had been born, and to try life in the open air with a milk diet. I hardly expected the prescription would be followed, as the husband might object, but a few days afterwards I found they had taken her ; the young man went with her on the boat to bring her to her relations up the Nile. I did not leave without reading from the Gospel, and talking for some time with the young sufferer, and hope that a seed may

have found its way by God's grace into her heart, which may be blessed whether she lives or dies.

This is not exactly the case of an orphan, but though the poorest parents in the East are extremely unwilling to part from their children in general, there must be exceptional cases everywhere, and as I said before, I do not know the details in this instance; it serves to show the devotion that may be felt for one brought up as a daughter, and which is by no means uncommon here.

I remember in Ireland, where poverty was rife enough, it was no rare case to meet with an orphan brought up in the family of one who had even several of his own. "Sure, it's a little stray," said a poor woman once when asked if *that* was a sixth child. "How can you afford such a charge?" "Oh, they share and share together," was the answer, "my husband says he would sooner see the *regulars* go short than starve the orphan!" This was quite a trait of those poor warm-hearted creatures, and surely the Lord would bless such unselfish kindness. It is much the same feeling here, only that it is generally the childless, as I

observed before, that take up the orphans, and certainly it is the most suitable plan. If the adopted ones who come to our schools should be as we hope, taught not only in the letter of Scripture but by the Spirit of God, then how comprehensible to them will be the blessed words that speak of God's adoption of those who come to Him through Jesus Christ, "that we might receive the *adoption of sons.*" (Gal. iv.)



A SELLER OF POPPY-HEADS AND ONIONS.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOUSES ON THE SAND.

ANY one who is in the habit of observing what passes around him in Egypt, and of connecting the observations made by the eye with the stories and allusions of the Scripture (both in Old and New Testaments), must be constantly finding new and interesting illustrations. Even in the smallest and most trifling details something is always coming in one's way to recall some parable or some history ; and if sufficiently acquainted with the language of the country to converse with the people, and understand much of what they say, the interest is greatly increased of course. Among many others, an instance occurred last year which I extract from a journal written at the time. We were sailing on the Nile, having set out on our yearly excursion a few days before, and after being detained by contrary winds at first, were now proceeding very rapidly. Every one observed the unusual width of the river ; it looked more like a large lake in the *reach* which we were

crossing. "That is because of the great overflow last autumn," said the "reis" (or captain) of our boat. "You heard of all the damage that was done, no doubt?" We had certainly heard of several villages being washed partly or entirely away, and many fields of maize utterly destroyed, but it was a different thing hearing of all that in a general way, and being told some of the details while actually passing the very spot. "There," said the reis, pointing to a place where the current flowed strong and full against a rather steep bank of earth, which looked as if newly cut in the dark-coloured sandy clay—"that is where a garden stood, with pomegranates and other trees, not one is left—the whole plot was entirely swept away." I recollected gathering some early blossoms of the scarlet pomegranate flowers in the very spot, and sitting under the palms close to it reading to a circle of young girls, when we came here a year or two ago; now not only the garden but great part of the dwellings, in fact, half the village, had been swept away. We were going on rapidly with a brisk wind, and therefore did not stop here; besides, we were informed that most of the villagers were dispersed for the present, some having gone to other villages till their

houses could be repaired, and some having emigrated permanently to the opposite coast, so that there was not much chance of finding our former acquaintances. After a few hours more we halted near a small village which had been almost worse off, for two-thirds of it had been destroyed ; only being much poorer, and the houses mere huts, there was less to lose ! It was a desolate sight, however, poor as had been the habitations ; the heaps that marked where once *homes* had stood—miserable to our eyes indeed, but still homes to them ; and the poor wigwams in which most of them were now dwelling, composed only of a few bundles of dry reeds tied together at the top, were a descent in the scale, and even more comfortless than the huts ! Several men were actively engaged in spreading mud bricks to dry in the sun, for rebuilding ; here and there up-rooted palms lying about showed what force the overflowing waters must have had. I sauntered about among the palms that yet remained, for enough had stood firm to afford a pleasant flickering shade. Presently, seeing a woman employed in repairing a very rustic sort of handmill outside her wigwam, I made the excuse of coming to look, in order

to get an opportunity of conversing with her.

The place into which the corn was put round the grindstone was out of repair it seemed, and she plastered it over with mud, her hands being her only tools! She was a sunburnt, hard-worked peasant of middle-age, whose mind had all her life been ignorant of everything except the narrow concerns of a little village: palm-trees and mud huts, the flow of the river in its season, the buffaloes, and goats, and chickens, were the sole objects which that poor mind had to exercise itself upon; besides, of course, the nursing of her children while young, and the deaths of probably about half the number through dirt and neglect, and the occasional beatings from her husband while he was alive (for now she was a widow). These details were matter of conjecture only, but I judged not from her remarks alone, but from previous acquaintance with a great many peasant women of the Nile. This woman was an average specimen apparently of her class.

At first her surprise at a "Frank" sitting down to chat with her was evidently mingled with a little suspicion lest the evil eye or some sinister

view or other might be lurking under a friendly salutation ; but she gradually melted under the simple, cheerful replies she received to her questions as to what I came for, and who was with me, and why we were on the river, etc. By degrees she became quite friendly in her turn, and told me several facts about the inundation, and the mischief it had done. "I see you are living in these things made of straw and reeds," I observed. "Yes, our houses were washed down, and my buffaloes were drowned, and my fowls also ; we had great loss."

I sympathized heartily with the poor people's troubles, and then went on to say that I supposed the houses were not very strong. "Were they not built on the earth merely?" "Oh, yes, certainly ; and when the current was so violent they could not stand it."

"Why did you not make them on a rock?" I asked, looking round at a group of women who were now standing and sitting around us, curious to hear the conversation. The woman laughed, as she answered, "We have no rocks here." "If you had rocks as they have at Tura, on the other side of the river lower down, and had built on them, would the houses be able to stand

against the water.” “Yes, no doubt; but what can we do? We have no rocks here, and we are too poor to bring stones from a distance, but stones would be much better certainly; then the houses would be firm.” This was just the point to which I wanted to bring her, in order to make her understand the parable of the house built by the foolish man on the sand, etc.; and drawing out a small Testament, I said that there was a story in this book which was about building, and if they would listen I would read it to them. A willing assent being given, I explained first a little, and then read the parable, and tried to show its application. It was difficult to imagine a more suitable spot in which to read those words; —the *débris* of the ruined houses at our feet; the people still suffering from the loss of their few possessions that had been carried off in the flood; and on the opposite shore, just visible between the palm branches, a pink line against the horizon showed the long range of rocky cliffs which were safe from the encroachments of the swift flowing river.

Poor women! they could easily understand the illustration on its earthly side, but to teach them how to found their faith on the true Rock was not so easy, in a limited time, and with such

depths of ignorance to contend with. I endeavoured, as far as circumstances allowed, to show them that the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, was the rock, and that to believe in Him and his atoning sacrifice was to have our foundation on that rock. Some looked, wondering, and others turned away when their curiosity was satisfied, but two or three seemed interested and touched. While we were still speaking, the circle was joined by a man, who saluting me, said, "Are you from those people that came last year to this neighbourhood and stopped at K——?" On being answered in the affirmative he went on to say that a friend of his who lived there knew us, and had got a book from us. "Does he read in it?" I asked (recollecting that it was a Gospel of St. John). "Oh, yes; he is fond of this book, and I want one also."

The women of the party did not run away or even veil themselves on a man's joining them, but their attention was diverted (as they were not in the habit of paying long and fixed attention to anything mental, the least diversion was sufficient to distract them; and besides women will rarely ask questions on any subject when a man is present), so I was glad to see Mr.

Shakoor approaching, and left the man to him. It seemed he could not read, but wanted a book for a brother of his who would read to him, he said, and who wanted to improve in reading. I am afraid there was no higher motive, but who can tell that the little book of Gospel extracts which was given him may not have proved of still higher usefulness to one or the other? While he and one or two companions listened to Mr. Shakoor, I talked a little longer to my poor women; but the light was now waning, and their neighbours, with pitchers on their heads, were hurrying to the water, and passed us in troops, and they were obliged to go on the same errand; so bidding them farewell I rose to go, but was followed by a young woman carrying a baby, who begged for some eye-water, as one of her eyes was becoming dim. I told her to come with me to the boat, which was nearly a mile off; the walk afforded some time therefore for conversation. She was a young widow, I found, whose husband had died in consequence of long exposure and fatigue in trying (vainly as it proved) to save his live stock in the inundation. She had absolutely nothing in the world but the ragged veil and blue shirt she wore—her child was half-naked and suf-

fered with cold. "But I have no one to work for me," she said. "I sell the vegetables for my mother from her land, carrying them to a distant village for the weekly market, and in return she gives me bread, but nothing besides. She is poor, and has many children, but I am badly off for something to cover my poor child." I promised to try and find some sort of covering if possible in the boat, and meantime asked her if she knew that God was a Father of the fatherless, and a God of the widow, and that He said so in his Holy Word. As might be supposed, she knew very little of those things that are not seen by the eyes, and her idea of God was vague enough. Still she *had* some little notion of prayer, for she said, with touching simplicity, "Oh, lady, I do say, 'Lord, take care of my child!' every day I say so. Do you think He will hear me?" she continued, pressing the pretty creature, which was seemingly all she had to love, more closely to her bosom, and trying to cover it from the chill wind by her time-worn veil of black muslin. "He *does* hear you, dear friend, no doubt of it; He hears the cry of the poor; it is said so in his blessed Word," I said, and then endeavoured to explain to her a little more about what we had been read-

ing, and to urge her to pray for herself as well as her little one, and to ask for teaching and light from God. "No one ever told me of these things before!" said the poor young widow, with a wistful expression that went quite to the heart. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" came into my mind as I went down the bank (for we had now reached the boat). I fetched her something to wrap round the baby, and prepared the medicine she wanted, for both of which she was very grateful, and promised to try and recollect what I had told her. The seed, alas! was sown amid thorns and weeds in plenty; for how many, how very many, were the hindrances in her daily life, and how faint seemed the probability of that one conversation remaining in her mind! Yet if she prayed, the All-powerful and All-merciful could keep that good seed from being choked, and others too can pray for her. The following year I came to the same village, and though only stopping for a very short interval I found time to inquire after my young widow. She was no longer a widow, having found the usual (if not the only) means of comfortable support for one in her country and circumstances, by marrying a peasant who had taken her and her little girl to the

opposite coast where she now lived. Her mother and a little sister told me this, and said she had not forgotten me, “and the little woollen thing you gave the child,” added her sister. Whether it reminded her of our talk or not I had no means of knowing, it was just one of the many instances of “bread cast on the waters.” But it may be that when she sees the river rising and the inundations washing the shores, and threatening the frail huts on their sandy foundations, she may recollect the stranger who told about the house founded upon a *rock*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WIND.

HIGH winds, though doubtless beneficial, are by most people thought disagreeable anywhere, and the hot winds of Egypt are well-known by all who have ever passed April and May there. But the cold winds of winter are very much less trying to health, and in fact compared to the easterly winds of Europe, are not really very cold; still to those who have been through the summer heats, they are chilly enough, and the houses usually are so built as to admit wind, with its companion, fine dust, more than is at all agreeable. A strong wind on the Nile is a great annoyance to travellers, as the scenery is lost in clouds of dust; the boat shakes and trembles, and it is dangerous to proceed in many places on account of the strong current. If it is contrary, of course there is no question of proceeding, and the traveller must quietly wait till a change

comes. It is seldom very long in the winter, about two or three days is the ordinary limit for his patience. But on our little Nile trips, in which we were always limited to time, even a few days' loss was felt, and the more so as the blustering wind is a particular enemy to all sorts of missionary work. The peasants do not loiter spinning or smoking on the shores at sunset, as they do in calm evenings; the women hurry to the river with that quick gliding step which so rapidly gets over the ground (their thin cotton garments blown about uncomfortably by the blast), and patiently, but as swiftly as possible, they wash and fill their pitchers, hoist them on their heads with wonderful sleight of hand, and return without pausing to gossip together, or sit and stare at the strangers as at other times. "Come, Fatmeh! come, Hosna!" I hear them say; "make haste, child, the light is going, and there is wind to-day, quick—quick;" and away they go in a troop—no chance of getting into conversation as on a fine calm evening. The boatmen are inaccessible; rolled in cloaks and mantles they sit immovable on deck in a half slumbering state, or retire to the hold to keep themselves as warm as they can among the packages and

lumber. If we try to brave the blast and walk a little on shore, we are soon driven back ; the dust fills mouth, eyes, and nose, and the few passers-by hurry along as if their houses were on fire, and they were escaping for their lives. The palms toss their branches furiously, and seem to partake the leaden hue of the river—for the palm is in this respect like a chameleon, that its hues depend on the atmosphere—in sunshine it takes a bright colour, almost as if it were made of glass, and if all is dull shares in the dulness. However, the wind sometimes has turned to good in a way little expected, by obliging us to stop at some places which otherwise we might have passed ; and before it was sufficiently abated to allow of our proceeding, opportunities have been found where we did not look for them.

Here is an instance which is selected from a Nile journal :—

“ *Feb.* —, 1869.—We are weather-bound at ——. In the time of inundation they say this place is quite an island ; it is nothing of the kind in winter, however. We went out this morning in spite of the dust storm, just to look about ; but most of the party were soon driven back, and I was going to follow, when a troop of village

children with several women among them came round to have a stare, and I lingered for a moment to try and see if any face I recognized were among them, as we had once before been here ; the dust blew into my eyes so that it would have been difficult to recognize the oldest friend at a hundred yards off, but one presently ran up and seized my hand with heartiness, exclaiming, ‘ You were here last year ; come—come to my house ; come out of this wind quickly.’ I willingly agreed, and followed her to a shed-like room, roofed with reeds, and open on one side, but luckily not the *wind* side, so that if not very comfortable it was at least a shelter from the blast and from the dust. Several women in dark and often ragged garments of thin cotton, ill-suited to the season, but all wearing bracelets of massive silver, seated themselves around on the floor, and my hostess kindly insisted on spreading her husband’s woollen mantle for me, though I would have preferred the earth, because it was less dirty.

“ One aged man was present, the rest were all women, about forty in number, I think. The one who had brought me in now repeated her salutations in the usual courteous Eastern style, and desired one of her daughters (or daughters-

in-law) to bring a pan of milk with some bits of native bread soaked in it, and entreated me to eat. I thanked her cordially, but wanted to decline, as the bitter seeds generally ground up with the corn in these villages, in the idea that it improves the flavour of the bread, make it to European taste extremely unpalatable. However, to avoid displeasing my good-natured hostess, I had to swallow a few morsels with as cheerful a face as possible; and then we began to chat in a friendly way, and presently I proposed reading to them, and no objection was made. I read the parable of the 'Prodigal Son,' to which they listened with interest, and I endeavoured to make them see something of the meaning. Then the miracle of Christ healing the man sick of the palsy: when we came to the opening of the roof to let down the man, two or three of the hearers glanced up at the roof over our heads, formed of bundles of reeds laid over long beams made of palm-tree trunks, and observed what a good way it was; it seemed exactly the right place indeed to illustrate the story. I do not suppose the better kind of houses in Palestine had this sort of roof in our Lord's time any more than at present, but such might be often found among the poorer

dwellings, especially for *part* of a house as in the one I was now visiting. There was an inner room with a roof of more solid materials, but this was a sort of antechamber used for a variety of purposes, and capable of containing a good many people, being tolerably spacious. Its side posts were two palms in full vigour, which grew in the court, which had a pretty effect, though the dwelling had no other pretensions to either beauty or convenience. But to return to my poor audience: I tried to induce them to ask questions and so to elicit some simple explanations, and to bring before them the meaning of our Lord's words to the sick of the palsy: 'Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.' Several agreed that sin was in the heart of all; we conversed for more than an hour, and I was obliged then to leave them from sheer fatigue, but at the request of more than one of the group I promised to come again in the afternoon. My hostess said, as she accompanied me to the boat, 'Surely God sent this wind on purpose that you might come to us!' In the afternoon a rather smaller party assembled, but still more than twenty were present. One whom I had wished much to see again—a young woman who showed considerable

intelligence, and had seemed really touched—was gone for some business, they told me, and some were already fetching water, though it wanted more than an hour to sunset. I was desired at once to produce the book, and gladly consented, and read several passages. Presently one of the women belonging to the family observed, ‘All are not sinners; why do you say *all* have sinned? It is not true.’ ‘My dear woman, did you ever know any one entirely free from sin? Did you, or you?’ turning to those around me. Several voices replied, ‘No—no;’ but this woman, who sat at my left hand, said in a very emphatic tone, and holding her hand at a short distance from the earth, ‘From the time I was so high I never did a single wrong thing. My heart is white!’ ‘Do you mean that you never did any sin at all by *word* even?’ ‘Never; I was always so kind to every one, and never did or said wrong.’ ‘If it be so you have still sin towards God, for we all forget Him very often; do you think you always remember God and never forget to thank Him for his blessings?’ ‘Never!’ she coolly replied; ‘forget God indeed? Why, I am calling out “O God! O God!” all the time.’ ‘Ah! that is just one of our sins! The great God has commanded us never to take his name in vain, and this you

do.' 'No—no,' she persisted ; 'it is not vain in me. I know many women sin by their tongues as you said before, but I am different ; as I told you, my heart is white.' While she was running on thus in her own praise, the aged man who sat behind me, twitched my sleeve with his hand, and winking his eyes at me, said, 'Listen, lady, and I will tell you something ; what she does sometimes.' He was her father-in-law, I believe, and probably saw a good deal of the imperfections of the boasted righteousness. He was proceeding to say something which I could not understand, as he had lost his front teeth from age, and the indistinctness of utterance made it hard for a foreigner to catch his meaning ; but before he had ended his sentence the woman had turned round upon him with a look in which anger and shame were evidently contending, and putting her hand on his mouth, told him in a tone of extreme annoyance to be silent, and not talk foolishly. A titter ran through the party at which I could hardly wonder ; but I stopped them by asking leave to read another history to them (that of the Pharisee and Publican), and diverting their attention from her to the subject of repentance and pride, etc. After an hour spent with them, in which very few left the circle,

the waning light warned me to retire; and escorted by half a dozen of the poor women I returned to the beach. One of them kept hold of my hand during the short walk and then kissed it, saying, 'I love you.' She had neither asked nor received any worldly advantage; not one of the whole party having asked for a backsheesh (this was not a place at all frequented by Europeans, and it is only those, which are full of claimants for backsheesh in general), it was therefore only on account of the good words of the book, and the interest shown in her soul's condition. I could not find this woman on a subsequent visit, but the Lord knows where she is, and where is the seed thus sown.

"While I was engaged with the women, Mr. Shakoor and his brother, with a parcel of books, had gone to a more distant village; indeed, to more than one, and had found several hearers, and some who were glad to obtain books. The details would be at the least as interesting as the conversations among the women, and probably far more so, as there is in general more intelligence among the men; the small amount of education possessed by some of them being better of course than none at all, but as they did not keep a diary

I have no record of these visits. In the evening, as the weather was improving, some men from a neighbouring farm (agents, bailiffs, etc.) came to the boat and spent some time in talking and listening to the Scripture—with what effect we have no means of knowing, as the following year we were not able to stop there, but the command and the *blessing* also are to those that ‘sow beside *all* waters.’ This day’s work, therefore, was in a great degree the consequence of the wind—a fitting emblem was that unseen yet powerful agent of the wonderful Spirit of God—it made me think of the words in the prophecy of Ezekiel, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”



A WINDY EVENING.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DATE-PALM.

THE most graceful object in an Egyptian landscape is the palm-grove by the river-side, or the group of palms rising above the dense foliage of fruit trees in the gardens, or growing in twos and threes in front of a country-house or farm like natural pillars. But the palms depend on the atmosphere in a very great measure for their beauty ; the branch plucked off has no brilliance of colour to boast, it has not the rich green of the oak or beech, nor does it change to gorgeous hues in autumn like European forest trees. On a dull day it looks dull—actually grey and sombre like the clouds above—but then there are so very few dull days in Egypt, and the peculiarity of the palm is, that it *varies* with the colouring of the atmosphere, which is almost always clear, but quite different in the morning, evening, and at noonday ; the effect is wonderfully beautiful and

changeable. Now a deep purple seems the hue of those boughs that scarcely move in the calm evening—now, again, they are of a golden green—a little later of a bluish tint—and then rose, or crimson, as the setting sun casts its glow over the distant grove. It sometimes strikes me in watching these changeable, yet ever lovely hues, given by the sun and air to the palms, that they make a beautiful emblem in this respect of the true Christian character, which glories in deriving its beauty from above, and in reflecting in some faint degree “that light that came into the world.” And as the brilliancy and the softness united of those reflected hues are unequalled by even the rich colours of *natural* leaves, so the finest qualities in man, if only such as belong to his unregenerate nature, can never equal the depth and purity of the life in Christ.

The wild date-palms are often unfruitful, though exceedingly picturesque from the uncropped luxuriance of their branches; but the groves near the villages are always carefully cultivated, and afford a quantity of fruit which forms an important item in the diet of the people, being highly nutritious and much relished whether fresh or dry. Early in the spring the trees send

out a sort of pale green *sheath* (three or four on each ; I have seen five, but I think seldom more than four), this gradually opens, and an immense bunch of beautiful cream-coloured blossoms appears, with a slight delicate fragrance ; as these drop off, small green knobs are seen in their places, which are the future dates. They remain green and hard all summer, and though sometimes eaten even in that state by natives of the country, are very bitter and disagreeable to our taste. When the water begins to inundate the country, the dates ripen rapidly, and turn of a bright yellow, red, or purplish black, according to the variety. The red and yellow are the prettiest, with their clusters of gold and coral ; they are much esteemed in the fresh state, and the fruit markets are quite ornamented by the heaps of rich-coloured fruit which abound at the season, but the dead sweetness of the fresh date is to some tastes anything but agreeable, and to *new comers* they are considered very unwholesome. After a few weeks the splendour of the dates is gone, and they are shrivelled and brown in appearance ; the dried ones are, however, higher flavoured than the fresh. The Bedouins prepare small bags of skins in the neighbourhood of

Mount Sinai, and stuff them with dates, from which the stones have been removed, and almonds put instead of them : when well made, and not gritty with sand (as is sometimes the case), they form a nice sweetmeat, and are often sold to strangers as curiosities.

The date-palm is said to produce more and better fruit when of some years' standing than in early youth, and I have seen some of a great age which still bore fruit. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age," was the promise to the righteous—evidently comparing them to palms—as also in another psalm, "The righteous shall flourish as a palm-tree." We have no mention of dates in Scripture, which seems strange, considering how frequently the tree is alluded to, and how much more plentiful it seems to have been in Palestine formerly than it is now. One would suppose the fruit must have been used, and, if so, perhaps it is spoken of under some other name, or may be included in the words, "summer fruits," as it ripens in the end of summer. But the palm is more the tree of Egypt than of Palestine now, and the groves on the river shores are countless in number. When the inundation floods the lower lands, I have been told (for I

never was on the Nile in the hot season) that small boats frequently sail under the trees and among them ; and the sheikh of a village with whom we had some acquaintance, once urged us to come and visit his place at that season, in order to see the dates ripening overhead, and the water beneath, which he declared had a beautiful effect, as I have no doubt is the case ; but the extreme heat and the languor all feel who are not natives, just at that period of the year, makes one scarcely feel equal to the fatigues of arranging an expedition, even with the temptation of seeing the golden clusters hanging from their feathery crowns, and reflected in the shining waters at their feet.

The gathering of the fruit is performed by a man with a loop of strong cord fastened round the stem of the palm, by means of which and the projections formed by the successive *rings* of bark, he ascends till he reaches the top, and cuts off the bunches whole ; the height in some is so great as to make the feat seem rather a dangerous one, but those who are used to it, climb nimbly and fearlessly, hitching their bare toes into the clefts of the bark. The palm trunk is not properly *wood*, but a sort of hard pith, quite unfit to

be used as timber unless (as in many native houses) it is made a beam of by being laid entire across the walls, but I should think it would soon rot from its want of solidity. The fibres of the leaves and clusters of fruit are used for ropes very extensively, and the larger ones as frames, cages, coops, benches, and all sorts of things; a *gafas* or *cafas* (the sound is something between hard *g* and *k*) is in fact quite a characteristic article of Egypt, and from the highest to the lowest, every one uses it in some form. Light, strong (comparatively speaking), and cheap, it is a valuable manufacture, and employs a number of persons, whose stock in trade consists solely of a billhook, a mallet, and a bundle of palm fibres, or the middle stems of the leaves, varying in length from ten or twelve feet to two or less. The longer and stronger ones are used as a mimic spear in the famous Arab games, and throwing the *jereed*, as these are called, is a very old and favourite amusement with Arab horsemen. The Bedouins on occasions of festivity enjoy this sport exceedingly, and it is very pretty to see the curious evolutions performed by their splendid horses, while they hurl the spear at one another, their flowing mantles and bright silk *kuffeehs*

waving in the wind. But the ordinary purposes of palm stems are, if less picturesque, far more useful, it must be allowed. The leaves themselves are woven into a variety of rude but convenient baskets, and slit into fine strips make *fly-flaps*, which far from being a luxury are an actual necessary of life during a considerable part of the year, when flies are in legions. Thus almost every part of this tree is of use, and no wonder it is prized by both Arabian and Egyptian, who depend on it for so many things. The leaves are furnished with very sharp points, so that it is needful to take care in walking through a grove of palms, as some always have *tufts* within reach of one's hands, and they inflict a rather painful prick; when quite young of course they are soft, and the tender yellow green of these young shoots is beautiful. In this state they are used in the Coptic festival of Palm Sunday, generally the young leaves are partly plaited or interwoven, the top being left in its natural state; thus arranged, they are carried about, and certainly have an extremely pretty effect. One only wishes that those who bear them had more knowledge, than is very often the case, of the Saviour whom they profess thus to honour; too many who bear

palms on this occasion know in reality as little of the great salvation He came to bring, as the people of old in Jerusalem, who cried, "Hosanna!"

In the great Mohammedan festival (some time after their yearly fast) the palm is brought into requisition; every one goes to visit the tombs of his family, and brings myrtle and other boughs, but especially palms, to adorn them for the occasion. It is far from being a grave or melancholy day. All the people hasten to the cemetery as early as possible in the morning, dressed in the gayest clothes they can obtain; the young girls looking like butterflies with their rose-coloured or green veils floating in the air, and their black eyes sparkling with excitement and glee. It seems very incongruous to our ideas—the swings and stalls of fruit and cakes close to the tombs—and the family groups first repairing to these "whited sepulchres," and then betaking themselves to merriment and fun for the rest of the day. But as a *scene* nothing can be more picturesque, particularly in the early morning, when the troops winding their way among the tombstones of the great cemetery, on the confines of the desert, are almost all bearing

palm branches on their shoulders. Thus one may trace the palm-tree and its uses from the humblest to the highest—from the villager's hen-coop and the gardener's fruit-basket up to the trophy waved in religious processions and laid on the tombs of the departed.

It often fills me with sadness to look at these trophies, though the sight makes the allusions to palms in the Scripture far more vivid and lively ; for when looking on the multitudes laying the palm branches on the tombs of their ancestors, and the children waving them joyfully as they pass, how can a believer help mourning over their ignorance ? For how few have even heard of Him before whom the blessed multitude, witnessed by St. John in his vision, stood, “ clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands ” ? May the Lord grant that some at least of the scattered seed of His word may so light upon the “ good ground ” of hearts that *desire* to know His ways, that there may be found in the great day a band of Egyptians among the happy ones who thus wave a palm in token of triumph over sin and death through Him who giveth us the victory, even Christ the Redeemer of the world !

CHAPTER XXV.

ON SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.

THE manners of Egyptians, of whatever class, are generally courteous, and though the educated of course are superior in this respect, it is remarkable to observe the politeness and friendliness of even the rough-looking peasants towards each other. They usually address one another as "My brother," My sister" (or, if an old person, as uncle or aunt), and hardly ever omit the courteous salutations in which their language is so rich. Sometimes the common people, if unaccustomed to intercourse with Europeans, will be rather sullen and bluff in manner, and always the civility to their own people is greater than that bestowed on strangers; this arises partly from bigotry, and partly from the dislike of foreigners natural to the ignorant. But among Egyptians who have long been in daily communication with "Franks," there is nothing of

the deferential manner we have heard of among Hindoos, no humbly coming in with clasped hands to ask "what master wish." On the contrary, native servants are apt to be rather too independent, and verge upon sauciness towards their employers; though handy and clever in many respects, they are idle, and try to shirk trouble when it is possible, and think nothing of replying, if reproved for a piece of neglect, "I was not at leisure;" or, "Must one never rest, then?" in the coolest manner possible. At the same time they are generally kind in sickness, and, on occasions of a move, or a journey, etc., can get through a great deal with cheerfulness and activity. On all festive occasions, especially the greater ones, the servants and poorer neighbours wish joy to their superiors in some pretty expressions, but all the best set of compliments and salutations are kept for their own people.

Whence arose the common idea that Orientals are all of a melancholy and serious turn I do not know, but I have actually heard a gentleman remark on it as an acknowledged fact, in a public meeting, and express a kind hope that the English ladies might be able in time to

induce little Egyptians and Syrians (in schools under their superintendence) to laugh and play. I can speak from personal knowledge of *both* that such lessons are quite unnecessary, and that there is among Syrians and Egyptians, though very different races of people, a point of similarity in their appreciation of drollery and enjoyment of mirth. I should say an English peasant was a much graver being, and much less easily made to smile, than an Egyptian fellah, although, when excited, his mirth may be of a louder and more boisterous nature. Lane observes that an Egyptian rarely laughs very loud, and I suppose this is what he means, for certainly a cheerful laugh is constantly heard when a party of workmen are resting and chatting over their coffee.

Many of the Arabic proverbs show a great sense of drollery ; as, for example, when a person rates himself highly for something in which he is absurdly deficient, “ The camel was asked, ‘ In what are you skilful?’ he replied, ‘ Winding silk!’ ” The contrast of the delicacy required in this operation, and the great clumsy foot of a camel, convey a capital idea of inappropriateness. Again, their edition of our common proverb,

“Every one thinks his own geese swans,” is much more funny, “The monkey’s mother thinks him a gazelle !” and so with many others, which show considerable sense of humour. Among the children practical jokes and fun of all kinds are as much relished as among English children, and it is often difficult to restrain their mirth in school hours ; but, when silent, their faces undoubtedly have a grave expression, from the strongly-marked black eyebrows, frequently joined over the nose, and the long thick eyelashes which usually shade their eyes, and the dark complexion and marked features. They are of course more *languid* than inhabitants of cooler regions, especially in the summer, but less so than those who have no winter. The short cold season is enough to have a certain bracing effect, and though it is true that there is a good deal of idleness, there is a good deal of industry also : the domestic servant will rather sleep or sit chatting with the opposite neighbour’s Hassan or Alee than run errands or polish knives, because his gain does not seem affected by the fact of his doing as little as he can ; but the agricultural labourer is very far from shirking his harder toil, because he is well aware that

the land will not produce its crops unless the irrigation is properly carried on. The countryman is patient too, and complaints are rarely heard from him. The townspeople are less favourable specimens of the race generally, and, in too many cases, manage to pick up from Europeans something or other they had better have omitted learning, without getting any good. Alas, that it should be so much harder to spread good than evil ! but weeds grow of themselves, while the seed wants culture and trouble in every place.

The street cries are characteristic in almost every country, and those of Egypt are therefore worth noticing among our observations. In England the crier frequently exaggerates the qualities of his goods, by declaring his fish of two days old to be fresh caught, bad fruit to be good, etc., but in general his exaggeration is of a very matter-of-fact kind—albeit, not really and literally a fact ; but in Egypt those who simply name their goods, and declare their value in plain terms, are few. There are some, indeed—the man who every two days passes my windows proclaiming “India muslin, fine English muslin, O girls !” in a sonorous, chaunting tone, is very

prosaic and simple ; at any rate, he waits till he has his customer at bay to commence his puffing. So, also, a curious-looking, comical negro, whose loud merry voice is daily heard in our quarter enumerating his sweetmeats, “Mulabaseeyeh ! Homaseeyeh !”* etc. He carries his dainties on a tray on his head, as is most usual, though there are shops for sweets also.

There is also a woman, whose voice is so sweet, and her chanting so pretty, as she goes along in the neighbourhood, that one ignorant of the language would certainly suppose she was crying roses and pinks, or some delicious fruit or other, instead of which it is *rags* ! “Any old frock or shirt, any handkerchief,” etc., she chants, in a rich, full voice, which would be a treasure to a singer. Her face and appearance are as homely as her occupation—the voice is the one charm !

All these are of the simple order of criers, but more numerous are those who vaunt their articles under such epithets that it is very difficult to guess what they really are selling unless one is looking out of the window, and can see actually the burden on their heads or on their

* Meaning sugarplums, and sweetmeats made of parched peas and sugar.

asses' backs. It seems to be thought the right and clever thing to name something (especially in selling vegetables, fruit, etc.) of a better kind or more prized than the thing sold. "Honey and sugar! oh, honey!" repeats an old man whose donkey is carrying bunches of *carrots*! In the season of the *gemazy* fruit (or sycamore fig), a very pretty-looking pink fig-shaped fruit, but only eaten by the poor, who are fond of it, and having no flavour except a slight odour of *tar*, women carrying immense baskets of this cheap luxury (for it is very plentiful) on their heads generally cry, as they go along, "White honey!—pure honey and grapes!" or "Grapes and sugar!" One I heard lately was saying, "Come, oh people, eat *pears* with white honey!" Another calls "Scents of Paradise!" when he is selling earthly blossoms. There are many others more far-fetched still, but so idiomatic as not to be very intelligible to a foreign ear, and hardly translatable.

Like most southerners, the Egyptians are much more easily contented than people of the north; in many respects this leads to an acquiescence in dirt, and discomfort, and a variety of evils which might easily be remedied—indeed, it is not a

disposition favourable to improvement; but it has a bright as well as a dark side, and it is certainly pleasant to see people as easily made happy by a mere trifle as children; and the absence of habitual murmuring might be a lesson to many of us whose blessings are far more numerous. If an evil is very pressing they will sometimes make a demonstration for the moment, but pretty soon cool down and make the best of it. The recently increased tax upon all country produce brought into the cities is a heavy burden to the poor (and of course renders the supply both smaller and dearer than formerly, many articles being rarely attainable that were a few years ago abundant). The station where two country roads meet being near our residence, we often see some poor fellah dancing about in a frenzy of anger and vexation at being forced, by threats and even blows, to pay more than he expected, or at being found out in an attempt to evade the law. But after his dance, and a shower of abuse and lamentations are over, he reloads his ass, and proceeds calmly, if not cheerfully, on his way; and, if one expresses pity for their case, they will usually reply, with a smile and a shake of the head, "Certainly, it's hard—may our Lord

God help us ;” or, “ Yes, by the Prophet, they indeed take plenty from us now ; formerly it was less, but what can we do ? ”

Occasionally they do, however, find a way to elude the sharp eyes of officials, and not unfrequently some clever peasant gets a parcel of vegetables, eggs, or butter into town in some quiet way, and thus makes a good profit. Not long ago, a funeral procession was seen entering by the chief road from the country, the chanting mollahs walking behind, and four men carrying the coffin with a red shawl over it, as is usual ; but some traitor had given the official a hint, and he insisted on stopping the solemn procession of mourners. They vainly tried to resist. He declared they must uncover the coffin (in the East this is open, and only covered with a pall, generally red, as I observed). Instead of a dead man, the coffin was found to be full of cheese, or what we should call salted curd, an article of general consumption in Egypt, and which, as it will only keep a few days, is incessantly brought from the country, and by this ingenious plan the sellers had hoped to get a large quantity into town free of duty.

It is difficult to blame the poor people for

tricks like this, because the taxation is always changing and always heavy, so that to obtain the necessities of life in their fertile land is no easy task for many of them. The Mammoors, and other inferior officers placed over the taxation, oppress the fellaheen, and take bribes, etc., so that the temptations to elude the law are very great.

They will cheat other than government officials, however, often enough; although we cannot consider cheating in buying and selling as peculiar to Egypt, when we remember the abundance of sanded sugar, and dusted pepper, and watered milk, etc., among our own people. There is, however, a certain difference in the *way* of doing it, a sort of *naïveté* in the Egyptian cheat, which provokes a smile, in spite of our regret for the sin. For example, I observed once a large heap of dry clay, in little balls about the size of a small pea, on the banks of the river, some way up the Nile, and asked a fellah who stood near what it was for, as there were two or three such heaps, evidently artificially arranged. "Oh," he replied, very coolly, "these are for mixing with corn—many boats laden with corn stop here." A boatman added that this village was famous for a particular kind of clay, suitable for the purpose, and therefore they came to take

some constantly. The corn weighed heavier in consequence, of course, and the purchaser was cheated; but we were not corn purchasers, so no secret was made of the trick. Here is another instance: a woman who had a cow (of which the supply in and near the city is very small) was asked to sell a certain amount of milk daily, and agreed to do so; but it was thought best, as she lived near, to insist on her bringing or sending her cow, so that the milk might be obtained fresh. "I cannot risk that my beautiful cow should be seen, and some one cast an eye of envy on her, and then all her milk would immediately go," replied the woman. "I never let her be seen on this account." I inquired if this superstition was a common one, and was informed that there was such an idea, but the real point was, the people liked to have the power of adding water to the milk, and kept up, or pretended to believe in, the fear of having the cow looked at. In the country villages, on the contrary, they have a notion that if they mix water with milk they will be punished by God, and the animal will cease to give any. Certainly it shows more conscience than the other. The country people are indeed simpler and better in many ways than those of the town, as before observed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

THESE brief and desultory sketches are now ended, though the subjects of which they treat are far from being exhausted. Man is always appearing in some new phase in every country, and a careful observer can always find details that are interesting to those who like to note the resemblances and the differences between the various branches of the great human family, and also the advances made by civilization among them—so slow in some, so rapid in others.

In Egypt old habits and customs were so deeply rooted, and the national dislike to change so strong, that probably no motive less urgent than the terror of the sword would have brought about so quickly the great changes consequent on the Saracenic invasion and the adoption of the Moslem faith. But, in all matters unconnected with religion, the common people clung

tenaciously to old ways, and even now it is but slowly that changes are introduced, when not brought in (like railroads and steamers, etc.) by the direct authority of Government. The English countryman dislikes reform, indeed, very often, and is wont to say his father did so-and-so, and why should not he? but, if he knew history, he would find that a very few generations back his fathers did as differently as possible, whereas the Egyptian sees himself painted to the life almost upon the walls of the wondrous edifices raised by his forefathers; dress, domestic habits, agriculture, etc., seeming the same, except in the points appertaining to religious ceremonial. I noticed a painting in one of the old tombs, in which a peasant was carrying a pair of geese in a peculiar fashion in a sort of basket on his head, and every item was as if photographed from a modern peasant; the style of basket, the dress, the way of packing the birds, etc. The primitive plough, the pick for digging, and other domestic utensils, seem quite unchanged (almost the only things unconnected with Pagan sacrifices, etc., which are altered, as far as I can see, are the women's head-dresses, no veiled faces being seen in the old figures, and the hair is

differently arranged). Of course these observations only refer to the fellah, or peasant class, who comprise, however, the largest part of the population. The merchant and tradesman have long assimilated themselves more or less to the Arab race, with whom they were mixed, and to the Syrians as the more commercial race. If cotton supplanted linen among the peasantry (at least, in part, for many still wear coarse linen), the form of garment remained the same, and the undyed wool for the outer robe is spun by the hands of the herdsman or shepherd, with his primitive spindle, just as in the days of his forefathers. That the Arabs should have driven out the language, when so many less important things remained untouched as it were, seems strange at first sight; but it was vigorously enforced by the invaders, the schools being obliged to adopt it, and, in the days when printing did not exist, a language had less chance of being retained than where books were, as now, cheap and abundant. The Coptic tongue, therefore, soon sank into a dead language, used, indeed, in the church, but understood by none of the listeners, a few learned men alone being able to read it. The terms of expression and idioms in

Oriental languages having a similarity, doubtless made the change less difficult than if an European dialect had to be driven out. As a race, the Egyptians are certainly very averse to change, and herein lies one of the chief hindrances in the way of any one who desires their real good, because some changes are unavoidable in the way of righteousness; as to those lesser benefits which belong only to this life, whatever is susceptible of improvement had better be improved than totally changed, but dirt cannot be improved, neither can sin, of which physical uncleanness is such a type. But no one who has not lived among them can imagine how difficult it is to induce the people to abandon any old custom, however bad or silly. Faith and patience are much tried; for those who love the nation, and desire her real good, want to see them "walk in newness of life," as the apostle says, not clinging to the things which cannot profit merely because they are old! May He who alone can work the great change in each man's heart, without which none can see the kingdom of God, call out of the midst of them a people prepared for Himself, who may serve Him in spirit and in truth in this life, and,

after the time of trial here is past, join the great multitude of all kindreds and nations who shall stand by the throne of glory with palms in their hands. If a few—nay, if but one or two—from among the huts be found there through the means of our labours, the years of toil will be richly repaid.

THE END.

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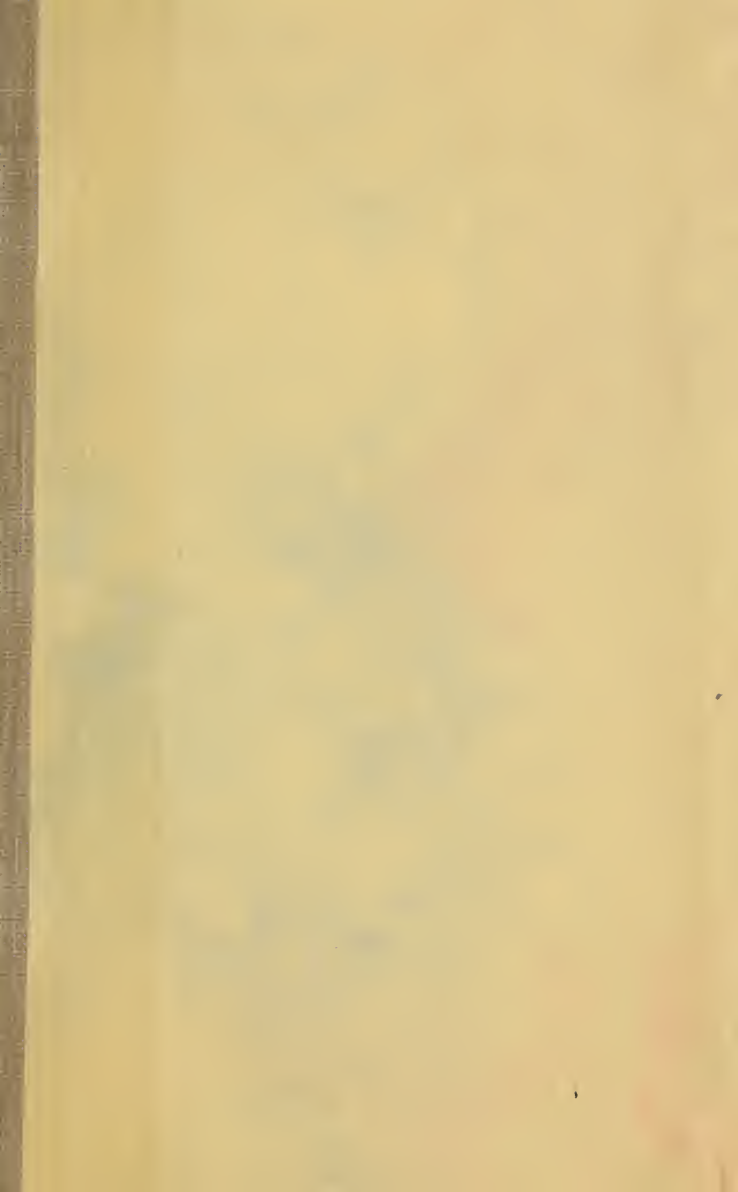
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